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## Defining and Addressing the Intersection of Sports, Media, and Social Activism

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DEFINING AND ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTION OF SPORTS, MEDIA, AND  
SOCIAL ACTIVISM

by

Kaylee Layne Crafton

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS

March 2021

Approved By

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Advisor: Professor Deborah Hall

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Reader: Professor Will Norton

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Reader: Iveta Imre

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## **DEDICATION**

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:23-24*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**THE INTERSECTION OF SPORTS, MEDIA, AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM:** When can athletes share their views about racial equality and social justice? (Under the direction of Deborah Hall)

Athletes have used their sports platforms and the elevated statuses of fame to share their political views and seek change for centuries. However, our society is now at a time in which athlete activism seems to be at its peak due to constant societal shifts and the quick, widespread dissemination of news through various forms of media. This study sought to answer one primary question: When can athletes share their views about racial equality and social justice? For Americans, the “when” in which athletes can speak up is often a divisive issue. This study analyzed how major sports leagues and collegiate sports are or are not engaging in the conversation of race relations, police brutality, and social injustice in the United States. Along with analyzing the sports leagues’ social and racial justice efforts, two surveys were conducted: one general survey and one for professionals working within athletics. Through close-ended and open-ended questions, the survey respondents were able to share their views regarding athletes speaking up for racial equality and social justice. The results showed that the majority of survey respondents did support athletes’ rights to speak out against racial inequities and social injustices; however, they also showed that the majority of these respondents did not support athletes sharing these views during sporting events. The research portion of the project was followed by a hypothetical public relations campaign. The campaign, named “C Us Speak”, was designed for the Boston Celtics basketball team as a way to promote racial equality and social justice while also showing the Celtics’ commitment to these principles.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
RESEARCH	2
CHAPTER I: A LONG HISTORY OF ATHLETE ACTIVISM	3
CHAPTER II: WHO'S SPEAKING?	8
CHAPTER III: SURVEY RESULTS	26
CHAPTER IV: LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL ERRORS	43
CHAPTER V: SURVEY SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	46
HYPOTHETICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN	49
SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CLIENT AND MISSION	50
CAMPAIGN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION	57
SCHEDULE AND BUDGET	74
EVALUATION PLAN	79
APPENDIX	82
WORKS CITED	92

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACC	Atlantic Coast Conference
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BPC	Black Players for Change
HDA	Hockey Diversity Alliance
IOC	International Olympics Committee
MLB	Major League Baseball
MLS	Major League Soccer
NBA	National Basketball Association
NBPA	National Basketball Players Association
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League



## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Preliminary Hypotheses**

Prior to conducting this research, I hypothesized that the majority of respondents would share the opinion that athletes should be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events. More specifically, I hypothesized that the majority of sports fans, especially those in the college or young adult age ranges would share this sentiment. This belief came after a strong surge in race-related protests inside and outside of the sports industry during the summer and fall of 2020. These protests were shared and amplified through the media. As athletes began using their sports as their platforms to speak out against racial inequality, social injustice, and police brutality, I witnessed a large response to these protests on social media from sports fans, my peers, and more. Based on what I was generally seeing and hearing, I was fairly confident in my preliminary hypothesis that most respondents would be in agreeance with athletes using their sports as platforms to speak out against these injustices during sporting events. I further hypothesized that professionals working within athletics would be the most supportive group for athletes using these platforms to share their political views regarding social justice and racial equality. I also hypothesized that the majority of those against this idea would be among the older age groups and primarily Caucasian. This notion was also based on what I was generally hearing and seeing on social media in response to these protests by athletes. As mentioned, I felt fairly confident in my preliminary hypotheses; however, the results of my research were surprising.

# **RESEARCH**

## **CHAPTER I: A LONG HISTORY OF ATHLETE ACTIVISM**

Political and social activism in sports did not begin in August 2016 when former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick silently sat then kneeled during the national anthem to protest racial oppression and police brutality in the United States. Although these protests sparked controversy, created political division, inspired other athletes' protests, and ultimately cost Kaepernick his spot in the National Football League (NFL), they were neither novel nor unprecedented as political and social activism by athletes has existed for several centuries (Bond 2017).

Political and social activism go hand in hand. Political activism is designed to create awareness about political issues as well as activate individuals to respond to these issues. Similarly, social activism works to promote awareness of social issues and create meaningful change or reform. Athlete or sport activism is a combination of these forms of activism. This type of activism fuses political and social activism specifically through sports platforms. Essentially, athletes that engage in this form of activism use their elevated statuses of fame that their role within their sport provides in order to increase awareness or create change for political and social issues.

Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero commented on the idea of athletes using their platforms for political activism in 56 BCE: "In truth, there are three places in which the opinion and inclination of the Roman people may be ascertained in the greatest degree; the assembly, the comitia, and the meetings at the games and exhibitions of gladiators" (Yonge et al. 1891).

Nearly 600 years later in 532 A.D., sports activism also took center stage at the chariot races in Constantinople. Drivers from the Blues and Greens teams asked emperor Justinian to pardon two of their followers who had been given death sentences, but he refused. Rather than losing their spots on the roster or being shamed by a president or threatened by upset fans, the fallout of this incident was much harsher than Kaepernick's kneeling—the Nika Revolt that led to 30,000 deaths (Wulf 2019).

Since the days of gladiator games and chariot races, sports have evolved and sports protests have as well. While athletes have used their sports platforms to call attention to a wide array of issues, these protests, demonstrations, or calls to action all have one thing in common: the demand for change.

What is often recognized as the most iconic demand for change in sports history occurred during the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Leading up to the Olympics, the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) was founded and led by Dr. Harry Edwards. OPHR's main mission was to organize a boycott of the 1968 Olympics by black American athletes. "Their goal was nothing less than to expose how the United States used black athletes to project a lie about race relations both at home and internationally," wrote American political sportswriter Dave Zirin. The OPHR established four main demands: restore Muhammad Ali's heavyweight boxing title—to show opposition to the Vietnam War, hire more black coaches, uninvite South Africa and Rhodesia from the Olympics—to stand in solidarity against the apartheid in Africa, and remove Avery Brundage from his position as head of the International Olympic Committee—to condemn his actions that reflected white supremacy and anti-Semitism. Although the black American boycott of the 1968 Olympics did not come to fruition for a few reasons, some athletes remained determined to take a stand for racial justice (Zirin 2012).

Two of those athletes who took a stand still are remembered today for their actions against racial injustice. On October 16, 1968, the second day of the Olympic Games, black American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos both competed in the 200-meter dash. Smith set a world record time with his 19.83-second finish that secured him a gold medal. Carlos fell shortly behind him with his 20-second finish, earning a place on the podium and a bronze medal (Olympic.org 2020). When the two took the podium, along with second place finisher—Australian sprinter Peter Norman, the United States flag was flown while the national anthem was played. In this moment, Smith and Carlos bowed their heads and each raised a black-gloved fist in protest of racial oppression and in solidarity of black Americans. The two were also barefoot on the podium to protest poverty among black Americans and they wore beads to protest lynchings (Zirin 2012). Although Norman did not raise his fist, remove his shoes, or wear beads, he showed his support by wearing a badge for the OPHR that Carlos and Smith also were wearing.

The result of their peaceful podium protest was not all that pretty for Smith and Carlos, who were met with heated, racial insults from the crowd. They were removed from the stadium, kicked out of the Olympic Village, and suspended by the U.S. team. Their return to the United States wasn't met with the same level of fanfare one would expect when bringing home the gold and bronze medals. Instead, Smith and Carlos faced serious backlash which went as far as death threats. They eventually stopped facing as much heat and were given credit for their Olympic wins, but the same cannot be said for Norman. Although he only wore the OPHR badge, he never again was allowed to compete for Australia in the Olympics. He was forced to retire and was excluded from related events. Essentially, the Australian Olympic Committee tried hard to blot him out of their past (Blakemore 2018). Despite the fallout that ensued after Smith and

Carlos' podium protest, their actions during the 1968 Olympics are still noted as the most iconic sporting protest in history.

More than half a century later in June of 2020, the International Olympics Committee (IOC) released Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter. This rule, created by the IOC Athletes' Commission and the IOC, states "No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas." Some examples of prohibited protests outlined in the charter are: "Displaying any political messaging, including signs or armbands," "Gestures of a political nature, like a hand gesture or kneeling," or "refusal to follow the Ceremonies protocol." While the IOC Athletes' Commission expresses that they and the IOC are "fully supportive of freedom of expression," they also express "The focus at the Olympic Games must remain on athletes' performances, sport and the international unity and harmony that the Olympic Movement seeks to advance... It is a fundamental principle that sport is neutral and must be separate from political, religious or any other type of interference. Specifically, the focus for the field of play and related ceremonies must be on celebrating athletes' performance, and showcasing sport and its values," (IOC Athletes' Commission 2020).

With a history full of political activism in sports by athletes and athletic organizations, political activism continues to remain a divisive subject. As exhibited in Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, some organizations attempt to ban athletes from demonstrating their political beliefs during sporting events. Still, political activism in sports continued to grow. This was evident in the summer and fall of 2020. After the wrongful deaths of multiple black Americans and a resurgence of unignorable calls for racial justice and equality, more athletes used their time on the court or the field to speak out against racial and social injustices. As these protests have gained momentum and prominence, they have proven to be polarizing among sports fans and

non-fans alike. Many claim that sports and politics do not mix as the messages of “shut up and dribble” circulate. Others believe that it is the moral and social duty of athletes to use their time in the spotlight to highlight this cause. Among the divisiveness, the question remains: *Should athletes be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events?*

## CHAPTER II: WHO'S SPEAKING?

As history reflects, *who* is speaking up for social justice and racial equality has looked different throughout the years. Even now, at a time in which political and social activism in sports seems to be at its most prevalent due to changing societal norms and quick, widespread dissemination through various forms of media, athletes' activism varies among lines of race, geography, sports, and more. The sports organizations that employ these athletes also vary in their efforts to promote equality and social justice as well. To analyze these differences, I compared the actions taken by the major sports organizations in the United States: the National Basketball Association, Women's National Basketball Association, National Football League, Major League Soccer, Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, and collegiate sports. I consulted each league's website, multiple reports, various sports news platforms, and other online news sources to study what actions each organization was taking and in what ways they were permitting or encouraging their athletes to speak up for social justice and racial equality through their sports platforms. I then dove deeper into which players were speaking up and in what ways.

The National Basketball Association (NBA), which has the highest number of non-white athletes—83.1% (Lapchick et al. 2020), has taken several actions to combat systemic racism and promote social justice during the last year as a result of a push from its players. Although the NBA has vocalized support for promoting and working towards more equal opportunities and social justice for all, these words also have been met with actions. The basketball association has



created an internal, cross-department Social Justice Task Force and committed to increase representation of black Americans across the league. As players returned to the “Bubble” in Orlando in summer of 2020 to resume their season, each of the basketball courts displayed the message “Black Lives Matter.” The organization also supports players’ right to stand or kneel during the national anthem and deliver messages that express their political beliefs. As the season resumed, players also had the option to wear one of several pre-approved social justice messages on the backs of their jerseys. These jerseys later were auctioned off, and \$250,000 of the proceeds were donated to 18 different organizations that work to increase voter turnout and combat voter suppression. The NBA also worked with Vote.org to help players register to vote which led to 96% of the league’s eligible voters being registered (Medina). Further promoting voting, 23 of the 30 teams’ arenas or practice facilities were converted in voting places for the 2020 election. Additionally, the NBA and National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) created the National Basketball Social Justice Coalition in November 2020 in an effort to advance equality and social justice. In a press release, the NBA stated that the coalition was designed to “leverage the game’s influence to raise awareness, educate and advocate for meaningful reform...” and to “focus on action and change in several areas, including voting access and criminal justice system reform at the national, state, and local level,” (NBA.com). Furthermore, the owners of all 30 teams agreed to donate a combined total of \$30 million each year for the next 10 years to the NBA Foundation—which is dedicated to economic empowerment in the black community (Medina 2020). Although this list does reflect several of the NBA’s actions, the association is steadily progressing in the ways they address and work towards racial equality and social justice.

As mentioned early, the NBA boasts the highest number of athletes of color—74.2% Black or African-American players, 16.9% white players, 2.2% Hispanic or Latino players, 2.2% Asian players, and 6.3% from different ethnicities according to data from the 2019-2020 season (Lapchick et al. 2020). According to Richard Lapchick, the Director of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES), “The NBA has found a way to continue to lead the way when it comes to diverse and inclusive hiring among men’s professional sports leagues. There is an upward trend of women in team management positions.... The NBA League Office saw record highs in racial and gender hiring this year.” As the league continues to diversify, its players play a large role in the push for more diversity and social action. As mentioned earlier in this report, political and social activism is not a new concept in sports; however, after the events of spring and summer of 2020 and the outcry against racial injustice, it would be difficult to dispute that this type of activism by athletes has not grown. In the NBA, players from an array of races, geographic locations, and backgrounds spoke out against racial inequalities, social injustices, and police brutality—primarily after the death of George Floyd, an 46-year-old unarmed black man killed while being arrested by a white police officer. NBA players and former players alike such as LeBron James, Dwayne Wade, Donovan Mitchell, Kyle Korver, Michael Jordan, and many others spoke out against police brutality and the prevalence of racism within our country. Some athletes such as Jaylen Brown, Steph Curry, Klay Thompson, as well as others held or attended peaceful protests in response to the killings. Past and present players across the nation, even many players that are not U.S. citizens such as Enes Kanter, have taken to social media or news outlets to share their views (Millington 2020). With the league’s diverse make-up of players and its diversifying composition of administration professionals, it is no surprise that the NBA is highly vocal and active in the fight for social justice and racial equality.

The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), has the second largest number of non-white athletes—79.6% (Lapchick et al. 2020), and the league as a whole received A+ scores across the board on TIDES' 2020 Racial and Gender Report Card. According to Lapchick, "...the WNBA continues to be a leader in the industry among other professional leagues in terms of racial and gender hiring practices." The director further stated, "The WNBA sets the standard for powerful and inclusive representation across their organization in terms of players, coaches, staff, and administration." In terms of speaking out for racial and social equality, these league officials and players also have been agents of change in different ways. On July 6, 2020, the WNBA and the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) launched a new platform, "The Justice Movement," while also establishing the WNBA/WNBPA Social Justice Council. In the WNBA official press report the league claimed that the council's mission is "to be a driving force of necessary and continuing conversations about race, voting rights, LGBTQ+ advocacy, and gun control among other important societal issues." The WNBA dedicated the entire season to social justice and wore uniforms with Breonna Taylor's name on them in an effort to promote justice and change for women and girls that have experienced racial violence and/or police brutality without receiving deserved justice. The players' warm-up shirts for the season also displayed "Black Lives Matter" on the front and "Say Her Name" on the back. Similar to the NBA, each court displayed the "Black Lives Matter" message throughout the season. The WNBA not only allowed their athletes' freedom of expressing their political views inside sporting events, but they encouraged and amplified their voices by providing a more visible platform to do so. WNBPA President Nneka Ogwumike said, "With 140-plus voices all together for the first time ever, we can be a powerful force to our sisters across the country and in

other parts of the world. And may we all recognize that the league's stated commitment to us—'in this season and beyond'—offers a pivotal moment in sports history," (WNBA.com 2020).

The WNBA players have been active in the fight against social injustices, systemic racism, and police brutality as well. Ogwumike spoke of this in the official announcement of the WNBA/WNBPA Social Justice Council by saying, "As many WNBA players—past and present—have said and, more importantly, consistently demonstrated, the reason why you see us engaging and leading the charge when it comes to social advocacy is because it is in our DNA." Exemplifying Ogwumike's words, WNBA players of different races and ethnicities, backgrounds, sexualities, and locations across the country have joined together to lead the Social Justice Council—working to "address this country's long history of inequality, implicit bias and systemic racism that has targeted black and brown communities." Some of these athletes include Sydney Colson, Breanna Stewart, Satou Sabally, and Layshia Clarendon, along with others (WNBA.com 2020). In August of 2020, the WNBA boldly spoke out in response to the shooting of Jacob Blake by Kenosha, Wisconsin police. In protest, the Washington Mystics took the court clad in shirts that spelled out "JACOB BLAKE" while the other coaching staff members wore shirts with the number "7" printed across. Each shirt also had seven bullet holes on the back, and the team knelt in solidarity. Although players in the league as a whole have been very active in the fight against social and racial injustices, systemic racism, and police brutality throughout the season, the league's outspokenness in these matters has been prevalent for years. Ashland Johnson, founder of the Inclusion Playbook said, "The women have been talking about these issues for a while, and it took a guy to do something...for people to be like, oh, athlete activism," (Mathewson and Asmelash 2020). Errin Haines, Editor-at-large of The 19th, a newsroom that reports on gender, politics, and policy, made a valid point that WNBA players actually risk far

more than NBA players when speaking out against social and racial injustices, yet they persist in their efforts to do so. The wage disparity between WNBA and NBA players is significant. The highest paid WNBA players make around \$215,000 while Fox Business reports that the median salary for NBA players is \$2.96 million (Barrabi). “Somebody like LeBron James does not have to worry about his livelihood being threatened by his activism as opposed to, you know, a WNBA player who we already know was being paid significantly less...” shared Haines (Mathewson and Asmelash 2020). Despite these risks, WNBA players and league officials have been engaged in these protests and have used their platforms for civil yet powerful protests to promote change for years.

The NFL boasts a highly diverse league of players as well. White players accounted for 24.9% of the league during the 2019-2020 season while Black or African-American players accounted for 57.5%. In all, the league consists of 69.4% athletes of color (Lapchick et al. 2020). In TIDES’ 2020 report, Lapchick did not praise the NFL’s hiring practices in the same way that he did for the NBA and WNBA. “I am disappointed at the continued disparity in racial and gender hiring practices between the NFL’s League Office and their 32 teams. This serious underrepresentation of women and people of color at the team level can be seen in positions with significant decision-making power such as general manager, Team CEO/President, and in the C-Suites,” Lapchick said. This report from TIDES has not been the only source to criticize the NFL for their efforts—or their lack of efforts—in regards to social justice and racial equality. In an opinion editorial for *Fan Nation*, part of the Sports Illustrated Network, journalist Shawn Stevenson acknowledges what he claims to be a lack of equity in the NFL. Stevenson wrote, “The National Football League has failed to separate itself from the same systematic problems that are prominent in institutions across the United States.” He addressed the NFL’s silence over

police brutality during the death of black teenager Mike Brown in 2014, claiming that the NFL did not speak up until Colin Kaepernick's protests in 2016. As Kaepernick and the NFL faced serious backlash over these protests, the league did not side with Kaepernick and essentially took away this platform for speaking out against police brutality and racial biases as they blackballed him in 2017. Like Lapchick, Stevenson also addressed the racial disparities in the league's and teams' labor force (Stevenson 2020). Zito Madu, opinion writer for *GQ*, echoed many of Stevenson's thoughts about the NFL. He acknowledged the hypocrisy of the Washington Redskins (temporarily renamed the Washington Football Team in 2020 after years of countless protests) participating in #BlackOutTuesday in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. "The irony of course is that a team named after a racial slur was pretending to stand for racial justice," Madu wrote. Madu also criticized the San Francisco 49ers' effort to speak out for racial and social justice when they had disabled Kaepernick from doing the same within their organization and the NFL (Madu 2020).

Amid the criticisms directed at the NFL or individual teams, calling them to do more for racial equality and social justice, the NFL has taken actions to meet players', fans and non-fans' demands. All along, NFL players have been the heartbeat of the league's social justice efforts, pushing the NFL to do more for them and other Americans experiencing explicit or implicit racial bias, discrimination, and more. While Colin Kaepernick has been the face of athlete activism in the league since 2016, players' efforts started even earlier. At the same time Kaepernick was kneeling to protest police brutality and systemic racism, NFL safety Malcolm Jenkins also was taking action. In his 2010 football season, Jenkins and his mother started a charity to help youth in underserved communities. During that time, he was addressing gun violence in New Orleans. It has been a little more than a decade since then, and Jenkins' efforts

for social equalities have only increased. Since then, Jenkins has produced the documentary “Black Boys” through his production company, co-founded the Players Coalition, started working as a political analyst for CNN, and more (Triplett 2020). Another face of athlete activism in the NFL is football safety Eric Reid. As a teammate of Kaepernick’s in 2016, Reid was the first person to kneel alongside Kaepernick for the national anthem. Much like Kaepernick, he too is facing tremendous backlash for his protests and outspokenness. Since then, Reid has not shied away from vocalizing his desire for social changes. He has also boldly called out the NFL at times when he felt that their social and racial justice efforts fell short. As Reid continued to speak out and protest, this effectively sparked controversy. Despite setting career bests during the 2019 season, he was released from the Carolina Panthers and has remained a free agent since. Many call into question whether this is another attempt to blackball an NFL player for speaking up for change. Martenzie Johnson of The Undefeated attributed Reid’s free agency to two things by stating, “Although Reid has clear deficiencies as a starting safety, his continual free agency does not appear to be rooted in his performance, but for other factors, namely: (1) his initial support of Kaepernick and (2) his continued outspokenness when it comes to police violence and systemic oppression,” (Johnson 2020). While Kaepernick, Jenkins, Reid, and many other athletes remain vocal and active proponents of racial equality and social justice, the NFL has responded to players demands in different ways. In 2017 the Players Coalition, a charity and advocacy organization, was established by Jenkins and Anquan Boldin to improve social justice and racial equality. Although this organization has expanded across several major sports leagues now, in 2018 the NFL agreed to donate \$89 million over a seven-year span to the Players Coalition to support national and local projects. This was an effort by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and supported by team owners to get players to stand for the

national anthem, in which a 2018 policy prohibited protesting during this time. Two years later in 2020, Goodell said that he would support players that chose to protest during games and that the league had never truly enforced the rule—although, arguably, the situation with Kaepernick says otherwise (Haislop 2020). While the NFL’s efforts or lack thereof remain under heavy scrutiny, the league did step up to help end systemic racism in June 2020 through its promise to donate \$250 million over ten years to help in this fight (Battista 2020).

The Major League Soccer (MLS) presents the next largest pool of ethnically diverse players with its 60.1% of athletes of color (Lapchick et al. 2020). In TIDES’ report, Lapchick addressed MLS’ mixed performance of racial and gender hiring practices throughout all areas of the league. Lapchick stated, “The league office continues to set the standard, as it saw positive increases in both racial and gender hiring categories. Representation of people of color in the key on field positions of head coach and assistant coach have shown increases as well. It is disappointing to continue to see the overall gender score fall again for the fourth consecutive time. There needs to be an increase in effort to prevent this from happening a fifth year in a row.” Despite these mixed performances, MLS players have been vocal, especially since summer of 2020, in the conversation about racial and social inequities. Colorado Rapids forward Kei Kamara is among MLS players that have protested against these. In response to the killing of George Floyd, Kamara participated in a protest in which he laid prostrate on the ground, joined by hundreds of others, with his hands behind his back in honor of Floyd. Along with this, Kamara has joined with other MLS players such as Justin Morrow, Jozy Altidore, CJ Sapong, Mark McKenzie, Ray Gazzis, and others to discuss ideas to combat these harmful and unjust norms. This is not the first time Sapong and Kamara have worked together though. When the two played together for Sporting Kansas City in 2012, they joined to protest during the national



anthem by wearing hoodies over their team jackets—a tribute to Trayvon Martin (Hills 2020). Along with these efforts, MLS players joined together to form Black Players for Change (BPC). According to BCP, it is “an independent organization consisting of over 170+ players, coaches and staff of MLS, working to bridge the racial equality gap that exists in society. BPC is committed to tackling the racial injustices that have limited Black people from having an equitable stake in the game of soccer and society....” (blackplayersforchange.org 2020).

On August 26, 2020, the MLS was among one of the sports organizations to engage in player-led protests in response to the shooting of Jacob Blake by Kenosha, Wisconsin police officers. Players joined forces and decided to boycott the five of the games that night in solidarity of Blake and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Several MLS teams released statements in support of the athletes' decisions as well. Many coaches and players have shared their views across their personal platforms as well. The MLS also released a statement as well that condemned racism and promised the league's continued effort to fight for equality and social justice. The MLS has taken steps to back these promises with actions. The MLS has been supportive of players' rights to peacefully protest during the national anthem before games and released a statement that reiterated this support. Along with this, the MLS established a series of initiatives in October 2020 to fight against systemic racism and social injustices while committing to increase representation in the league. The league collaborated with BPC members, coaches, former players, club executives and more to establish these initiatives. As part of these initiatives, MLS owners donated \$1 million to help grow BPC. A few other initiatives within this plan are the MLS Unites to Vote initiative, the establishment of the MLS Diversity Committee, collaborating with MLS NEXT to increase representation among players, coaches, and referees, and more (Chicago Fire Communications 2020).

The Major League Baseball (MLB) is the first predominantly white sports league among those previously discussed. The league is composed of 60.2% white players with 39.8% of athletes of color. Recently, the league has faced backlash for falling behind in the fight for social justice and racial equality. Flash back 138 years ago, and the baseball league was a trendsetter in the fight for justice. On August 10, 1883, the Chicago White Sox owner/manager/first baseman demanded that the Blue Stockings not allow African-American Moses Fleetwood Walker to play. Although Walker had not planned to play because of an injury, manager Charlie Morton started Walker in right field. In an act of ultimate defiance, Morton made a stand against racism even if the league banned black players three years later. Flash forward 64 years later, and Jackie Robinson became the first black player in the MLB with Walker in 1947 (Wulf 2019). Although the MLB seemed to serve as a leader among organizations promoting and fighting for social justice and racial equality, the league's efforts no longer match those of other organizations. For example, in the wake of George Floyd's death, the MLB was the last among the major national sports leagues to release a statement after staying silent for days. Black athletes have said that this statement was only released after they questioned the MLB and pushed for a response. "They were questioned by all the blacks in the game, and that's why they released the statement. We're in a group chat, and some players questioned why MLB hasn't [released a statement] when the NFL, NHL, and NBA already had come forth," shared one anonymous black MLB player (Miller 2020). Scott Miller, journalist from Bleacher Report, pointed out that the MLB avoided mentioning the BLM movement in their statements, unlike the NBA and NHL. Miller also pointed out that far fewer MLB players have spoken out in regards to social justice and racial equality. He did however credit athletes like Bryce Harper, Dexter Flower, Giancarlo Stanton, Jack Flaherty, and a few others for speaking out. Miller did draw attention to the fact

that the five most popular athletes in terms of jerseys sold in 2019 were silent in response to Floyd's death and the calls for action that surrounded it (Miller 2020). In all, the MLB has shown minimal response and drive in their efforts for change. Players have progressively become more vocal about their political views, and many have protested through kneeling or raising their fists during the national anthem before games. Aside from gestures and words, the actions in this league have not compared to those mentioned earlier in this report.

Unlike the other major national sports leagues previously analyzed, TIDES did not include the National Hockey League (NHL) in their 2020 Racial and Gender Report Card. However, the NHL is composed predominantly of white athletes and has a larger fan base of white individuals than people of color (Whyno 2020). The NHL, with its checked past of racism, has a history of silence in regards to issues of racism or other social injustices. But when the wrongful deaths of black Americans in 2020 reignited the country's fight against systemic racism and social justice, the NHL broke their culture of silence. In the league that is more than 95% white, more than 100 of its players publicly condemned racial inequities, "acknowledging their privilege and pledging to learn and do better," (Whyno 2020). Some athletes went to the streets to protest, some made financial contributions to help aid in the fight, and some met with social activists. Taking a page from outspoken athletes in other leagues, Matt Dumba, defenseman for the Minnesota Wild, became the first NHL player to engage in a protest during a game as he knelt during the playing of the American national anthem (Weisholtz 2020).

Since then, more NHL players have begun kneeling or raising a fist during the national anthem. In June, seven current and former NHL players also joined together to create the league's Hockey Diversity Alliance (HDA). The group was founded by San Jose Sharks forward Evander Kane and former NHL player Akim Aliu. This alliance was established in response to

the killing of George Floyd and in an effort to speak out against racism and racial injustices. Although it operates independently from the NHL, league officials expressed its support of the alliance and a desire to collaborate with these players (NHL.com 2020). The HDA began attempting to establish a partnership with the NHL as well, and on July 14, the alliance asked for the league to sign their HDA Pledge that “includes commitments to funding grassroots programs for BIPOC youth, funding impactful social justice initiatives, anti-racism education, targets for hiring and promoting Black individuals and businesses, and rule changes to make the culture more inclusive,” (Hockey Diversity Alliance 2020). As months passed, the NHL did not meet the requests of the HDA, especially on August 27, 2020. When the rest of major sports came to a halt in response to the shooting of Jacob Blake, the alliance’s formal request that the games that day be postponed was not met. The league waited and postponed playoff games for the following two days—an action, or lack thereof that was met with disappointment from the HDA as well as fans and non-fans throughout the nation. Less than two months after the incident on October 7, 2020, the HDA officially announced that they would operate independent of the NHL. The alliance claimed that this decision was prompted by months of waiting with no response to their HDA Pledge from the NHL. The release stated, “Unfortunately, the support we hoped to receive from the NHL was not delivered and instead the NHL focused on performative public relations efforts that seemed aimed at quickly moving past important conversations about race needed in the game,” (Hockey Diversity Alliance 2020).

Transitioning to the world of collegiate athletics, TIDES did include college sports in their 2020 Racial and Gender Report Card. The report showed that 31.7% of student-athletes of color participated among all divisions of collegiate sports in the 2019-2020 season. It also reflected that women made up 44.4% of collegiate athletes. However, Lapchick did clarify in the

report that data from Historically Black Colleges and Universities were omitted, “not to further the exclusion of these institutions, but rather to highlight the disproportionate hiring practices reflected across college sports,” (Lapchick et al. 2020). He further clarified by stating the data would likely be skewed if these colleges and universities were included in the data, because they have high percentages of ethnic minorities and women. In his executive summary, Lapchick also included, “College Sport has historically not done well at increasing opportunities for women and people of color... Still, despite a decrease in racial hiring in practices since last year, college sport saw growth in gender hiring practices and, consequently, their overall grade. However, even with these improvements, college sport continues to lag slightly behind some of their professional sport-counterparts...” (Lapchick et al. 2020). Amid a global pandemic and a year of social unrest throughout the nation because of acts of racism, police brutality, and social injustice, many professional athletes, teams, and leagues used their sports platforms to speak out for change... Which begs the question: What have collegiate athletes done in response?

As professional athletes have turned to social media, news outlets, marches, in-game protests, and more to fight for racial equality and social justice, college athletes have echoed their actions. On a broader spectrum, collegiate athletes are governed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)—an organization that manages around 1,268 North American institutions and athletic conferences. Mark Emmert, NCAA President, spoke out to condemn racial disparities, inequality, and injustice in the nation in response to the death of George Floyd. On August 27, 2020, Emmert released another statement in response to the shooting of Jacob Blake. In this statement, he encouraged athletes’ right to peacefully protest as “a powerful tool to drive social change” further encouraging the full support of “student-athletes’ rights to be heard,” (Emmert 2020). The NCAA also has taken other steps to amplify student-athletes’ voices in the

fight for racial equality and social justice while also working to foster inclusivity among athletes, sports, and teams. In August, the organization launched A4, a four-part virtual program that sought to educate student-athletes on how they can enact social change while empowering them to do so. Along with this, in July the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel amended rules to now allow student-athletes to wear patches on their uniforms for commemorative and memorial purposes, expanding their opportunities to engage in the conversation for racial and social justice (Dent 2020). In June, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) commissioner Greg Sankey intervened at the state government level when he gave Mississippi an ultimatum: it had to change its state flag that bore the Confederate battle emblem, or it would forfeit rights to potentially host championship events (Horka 2020). “It is past time for change to be made to the flag of the State of Mississippi. Our students deserve an opportunity to learn and compete in environments that are inclusive and welcoming to all,” Sankey said. The NCAA supported Sankey’s ultimatum and adopted it one day later.

As shown, the NCAA, along with many of its athletic conferences, speak out against systemic racism, bias, police brutality, and other forms of social injustice that oppose inclusivity and fairness for its players and Americans. While the NCAA does not shy away from speaking social truth and implementing programs and tactics to give action to their words, many collegiate athletes have embraced their rights to express their beliefs and have used their sports platforms to do so. One example is Mississippi State University running back, Kylin Hill, who used the power of social media and his star running back status to bring about change in his home state. As mentioned, the SEC and NCAA passed policies that prevented Mississippi from hosting championship athletic events in their state until they changed their flag. When Mississippi governor Tate Reeves opposed the idea and cited that creating a new flag would “divide our state

more,” Hills tweeted to Reeves: “Either change the flag or I won’t be representing this State anymore & I meant that .. I’m tired” (Adelson 2020). Because of the growing pressure, the issue was taken up again with Mississippi’s legislature. The bill passed 37 to 14 in the state Senate and 91 to 23 in the House of Representatives to change the state flag. Signed into law by Governor Reeves, the flag was retired on June 30, 2020 (Smith 2020).

Along with Hills, collegiate athletes throughout the nation are finding different ways to share their messages and react to instances of racial inequities or social injustice. For many, this means turning to social media platforms to share their views, spark conversation, and quickly spread these messages to hundreds or thousands throughout the nation. Football players at Florida State University were among these when coach Mike Norvell came under fire for what he claimed he shared with athletes after Floyd’s death. After telling a reporter that he had spoken to each player individually in response to Floyd’s death, players were angered at his half-truth at best. In actuality, the team had received a mass text message from the coach, and he had followed up with a few players. After the players met and discussed the next course of action, senior captain Marvin Wilson took to Twitter on June 3, 2020 to report that Novell’s statement was a lie and announce that he and his teammates would stop workouts until further notice. This generated a lot of attention on Twitter, gaining more than 14,000 retweets, and more than 45,000 likes. The following morning, Coach Norvell apologized to the team, and players pledged to register to vote, devote time to community service, and raise more for an African-American college scholarship fund to help lower income students. A video posted by Wilson after the team meeting was viewed more than 400,000 times, giving proof to the power of social media in the fight for equality and human rights (Blinder and Witz 2020). Although a lot of attention in the media focuses on the racial equality and social justice protests held by college football teams—

because of the large team sizes, the sport being in-season during the height of the protests in summer of 2020, and the large following that these teams already have—players spoke out among all different lines of gender, race, and sports. Ashlynn Dunbar, a biracial volleyball and basketball player at the University of Oklahoma, was another athlete who participated in marches for BLM while also using social media to further convey the importance of racial equality and justice for George Floyd. Dunbar tweeted on June 2, 2020, “If you don’t support me here, then do NOT and I can’t stress this enough...support me here” with two side-by-side pictures below—one of Dunbar at a BLM protest holding a sign that says “Human rights are NOT a matter of opinion! #BLM #Justice4GeorgeFloyd #MyLifeMatters” and the other of her on the court in her volleyball uniform. The tweet received more than 6,700 retweets and nearly 40,000 likes (Blinder and Witz 2020). Through social media, collegiate athletes are understanding now more than ever the power they have to speak out, collectively and individually, to be agents of change in the fight to end systemic racism and ensure social justice for all.

In all, through my secondary research I discovered that leagues’ efforts to promote racial equality and social justice are varied. I discovered a correlation between leagues’ numbers of players of color and their efforts to combat these forms of injustices. For instance, the NBA and WNBA have been the most responsive to the nation’s outcry against social injustice, police brutality, and systemic racism. These leagues have taken more efforts than other sports leagues to establish initiatives, promote social and political change, raise funds for social and racial justice organizations, and more. They have also allowed players to protest with less restrictions than in other leagues (i.e. the NFL). The NBA and WNBA also have had the largest number of athletes that have engaged in these protests. These athletes have demanded more efforts from their leagues, and as my research has shown, these leagues have attempted to meet many of these



demands unlike other leagues (i.e. the NHL). My secondary research has also shown the ever-growing importance of social and political activism through the media. This was especially prevalent in collegiate sports as athletes' platforms to speak up for social justice and racial equality grew through their presence on social media. Players' usage of social media has also proven to not only be an effective platform for vocalizing their support of social initiatives or their condemnation of racial inequalities; these platforms have been used to create effective political and social changes.

## **CHAPTER III: SURVEY RESULTS**

### **Method Introduction**

Along with the secondary research conducted for this study, primary research was conducted to understand what Americans, sports fans and non-fans alike, generally believe about athletes sharing their views relating to social justice and racial equality inside and outside of sports.

To conduct this form of primary research, I designed two surveys regarding individuals' perceptions of the promotion of social justice and racial equality in collegiate and professional sports. These surveys were reviewed and approved by the Research Advisor and the University of Mississippi Institutional Research Board, and I was given permission to distribute them. I created the surveys by using a University of Mississippi Qualtrics account and distributed the two variations.

The first survey was titled "Athletes and Social Activism" and distributed via an anonymous link to adults 18 years or older. This link was distributed via email and social media between February 4, 2021 and March 7, 2021. This general survey was designed to gauge the opinions of sports fans and non-fans alike about when they believe athletes should or should not share their opinions relating to social and racial justice. This survey asked identifier questions such as age, gender, race, and geographic region. These preliminary questions were followed by eight close-ended questions (two of which provided an option that prompted an open response) and one open-ended question. In all, 545 individuals took the survey.

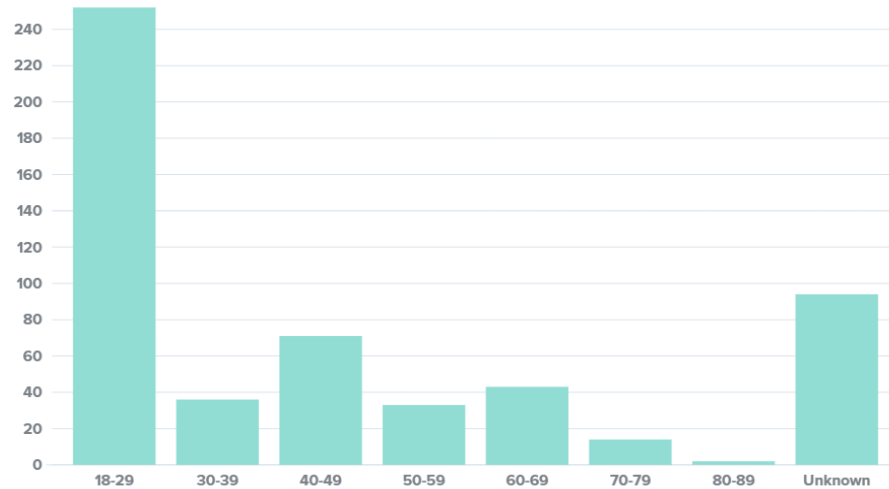
The second survey was designed specifically for professionals working within athletics. It was similarly titled “Athletes and Social Activism - For Professionals in Athletics.” It had the same set of questions but included one additional preliminary question that asked about the respondents’ role within their athletic organization (i.e. coach, athletics director, vice president of communications, etc.). These surveys were distributed through an anonymous link to 41 professionals working primarily in the public relations/communications departments of athletics programs throughout the nation. Of these 41 individuals, 11 serve as the Athletics Director, Athletics Director of Communications, or Communications/Public Relations Director or their athletic program within the SEC. Four professionals also were contacted from each of the major college athletic conferences: Big Ten, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), and Big Twelve. I attempted to contact professionals from four teams in each of the major professional sports: NBA, MLB, WNBA, NFL, NHL, and MLS. Not all of this information was publicly available online, so I compiled a geographically diverse list of athletic organizations’ officials to contact. In all, the survey was distributed twice to 41 professionals. Of these, four athletics professionals took the survey.

### **Demographics of General Survey Respondents**

The first survey, “Athletes and Social Activism” was completed by 252 respondents in the 18-29 age range, 36 respondents in the 30-39 age range, 71 respondents in the 40-49 age range, 33 respondents in the 50-59 age range, 43 respondents in the 60-69 age range, 14 respondents in the 70-79 age range, two respondents in the 80-89 age range, and 94 respondents who did not specify their age. The survey did not require participants to complete every question, and many respondents (as shown throughout the results) did not complete every question. As the

data shows, the majority of respondents were in the 18-29 age range, which is to be expected since the survey was largely distributed to college students.

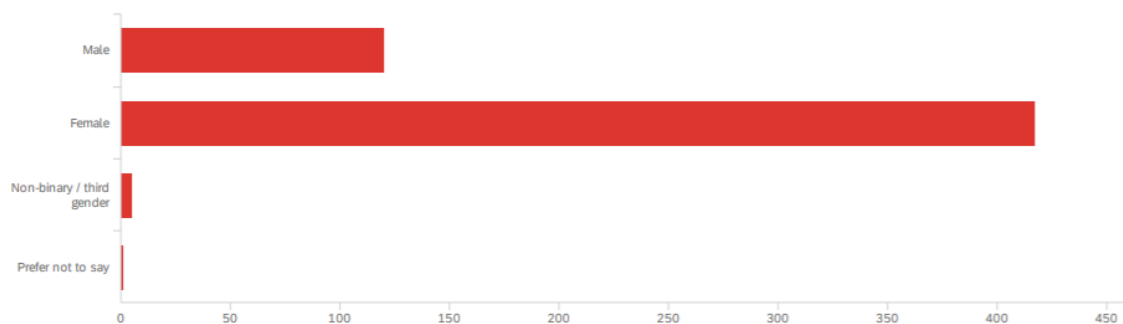
*Figure 1: Survey Respondents' Age*



The majority of the respondents also identified as females (417) while 120 respondents identified as males. Five respondents identified as non-binary/third gender, and one respondent chose the option “Prefer not to say.”

*Figure 2: Survey Respondents' Genders*

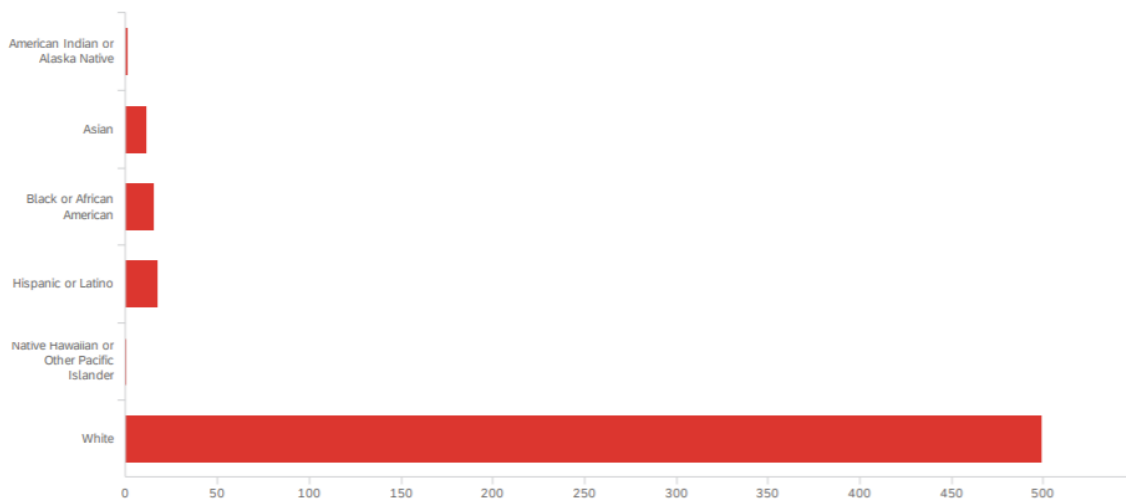
Q2 - What gender do you identify as?



91.9% of respondents also identified as White (499) while 17 identified as Hispanic or Latino, 15 identified as Black or African American, 11 identified as Asian, and one identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native.

*Figure 3: Survey Respondents' Races and Ethnicities*

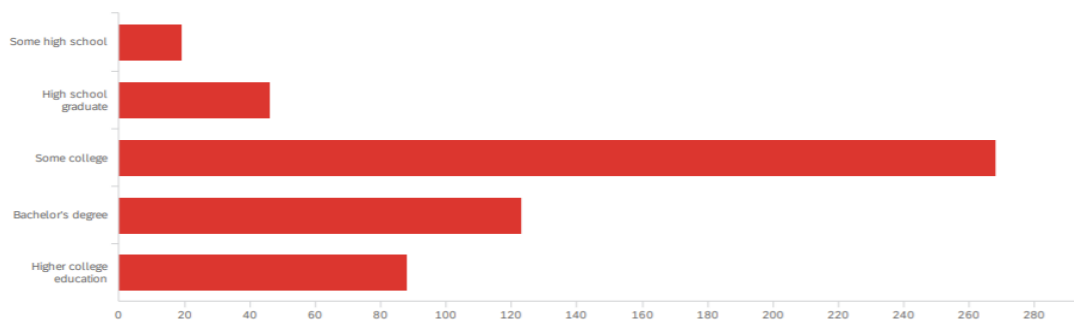
Q3 - What racial and ethnic category do you belong to?



Nearly half of the respondents reported that they had completed some college (49.26%). 123 respondents have received their bachelor's degree, 88 have received higher college education, 46 have graduated high school, and 19 have completed some high school.

*Figure 4: Survey Respondents' Levels of Education*

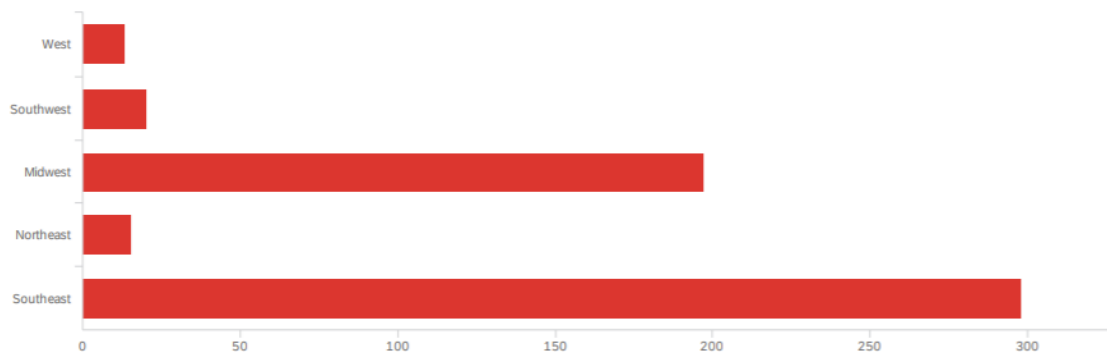
Q4 - Level of education completed:



A large portion of the respondents (298) reported that they live in the Southeast. 197 respondents reported that they live in the Midwest, 20 reported that they live in the Southwest, 15 reported that they live in the Northeast, and 13 reported that they live in the West.

*Figure 5: Survey Respondents' Geographic Locations*

Q5 - What geographic region do you live in?



I chose to include a breakdown of all of this data, because these numbers reflect back to my preliminary hypotheses. As mentioned, before I conducted these surveys I hypothesized that the majority of respondents would believe that athletes should be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events, especially those in the college or young adult age groups. I also hypothesized that the majority of those opposed to athletes protesting during sporting events would belong to the older age groups and be primarily Caucasian.

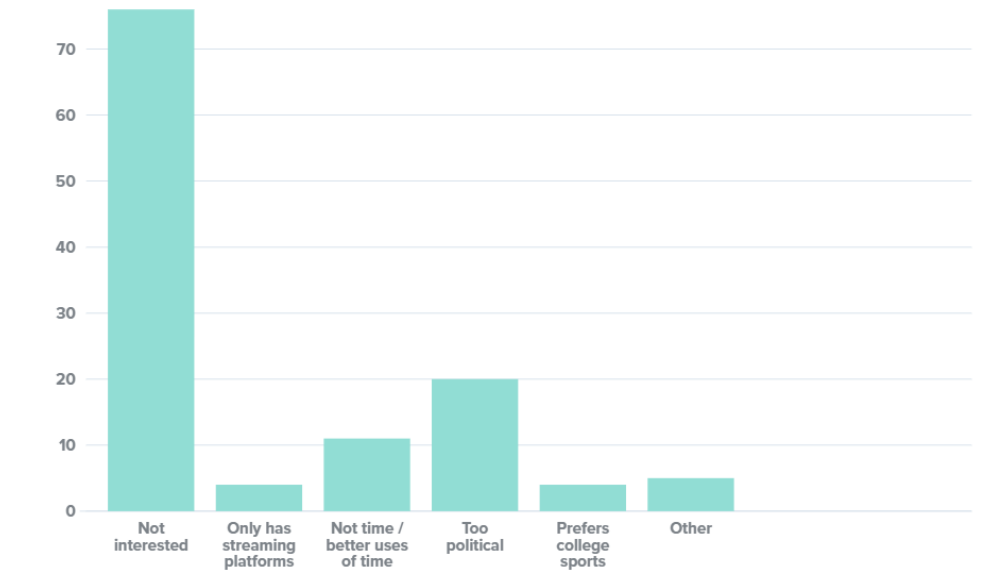
### **Viewpoint of General Survey Respondents**

The survey asked respondents “Do you watch/and or follow professional sports teams?” 328 answered “Sometimes,” 87 answered “All the time,” and 129 answered “Not at all.” The latter option prompted these individuals to write their reason below for not watching or following sports. 120 of these 129 respondents included their reasoning. The majority of these respondents

(76) wrote answers along the lines of “not interested.” However, the second largest number of participants (20) cited their reasoning along the lines that sports had become too political. Some of these responses include: “Too much drama and disrespect for our flag,” “It’s all become too political,” “Because too many are using their fame for political agendas. I want to watch sports for the game.” The other reasonings respondents cited for not watching or following professional sports were that they didn’t have enough time or had better uses of time (11), they only had streaming platforms and could not watch sports (4), they preferred college sports (4), or other reasons (5).

Of the 20 that claimed sports had become too political as their reasoning for not watching them, the respondents’ demographics varied among lines of age, race, education, geographic region, and gender. However, there was only a slight variation among races. The majority of respondents did identify as White (18) while one respondent identified as Hispanic/Latino and one identified as Black/African American. The majority of these respondents also belonged to older age groups. Four respondents belong to the 18-29 age range, two belong to the 30-39 age range, two belong to the 40-49 age range, two belong to the 50-59 age range eight belong to the 60-69 age range, and two belong to the 70-79 age range. This data correlates with my preliminary hypothesis that most respondents opposed to athletes sharing their views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events would be Caucasian and among the older age ranges.

*Figure 6: Survey Respondents' Reasons for Not Watching Professional Sports*



The same question was asked of participants in regards to collegiate sports teams: “Do you watch and/or follow collegiate sports teams?” 91 responded “All the time,” 334 responded “Sometimes,” and 118 responded “Not at all.” Again, participants that chose the last option were prompted to state why. Of these 188 respondents, 97 listed their reasoning. 69 participants responded along the lines of “Not interested.” Unlike the previous question, the second biggest reasoning for not watching and/or following collegiate sports was not having the time or having better uses of time. Ten respondents cited reasons along these lines. Seven respondents attributed their lack of engagement to collegiate sports being too political. Four respondents wrote that they preferred watching professional sports over collegiate sports, two only had streaming services, and five offered other responses.



*Figure 7: Survey Respondents' Reasons for Not Watching Collegiate Sports*



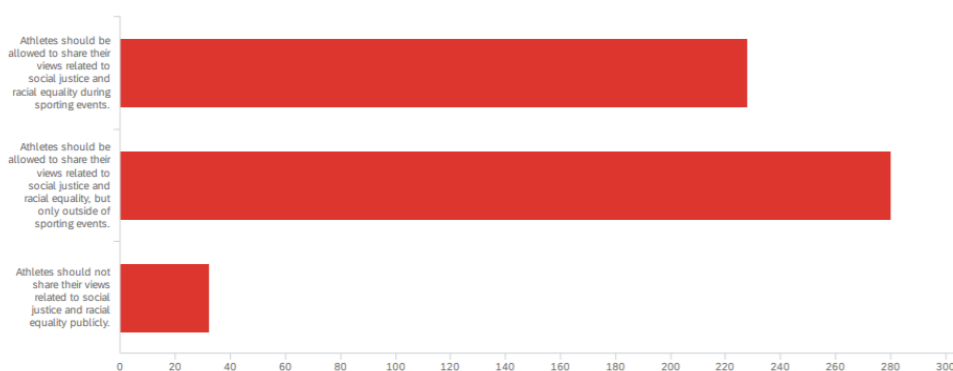
The next question asked “How supportive are you of athletes speaking out on issues related to social justice and racial equality?” The majority of respondents (179) chose that they were very supportive of this. 112 respondents chose that they were somewhat supportive, 134 chose that they were neutral, 58 chose that they were somewhat unsupportive, and 59 chose that they were very unsupportive. Of those who stated that they were somewhat unsupportive or very unsupportive of athletes speaking out on issues related to social justice and racial equality, 32 respondents were in the 18-29 age range. This amounts to 12.7% of the respondents in this age group. Ten respondents in the 30-39 age range also chose one of these answers, amounting to 27.8% of this age group. 21 respondents in the 40-49 age range chose one of these two answers as well, amounting to approximately 29.6% of their age group. Thirteen respondents in the 50-59 age range selected these choices, amounting to 45.5%. Twenty out of 43 respondents in the 60-69 age group also selected one of these options, amounting to 46.5% of the group. Seven of the 14 respondents in the 70-79 age group chose one of these answers as well, amounting to 50%. As the data show, a consistent upward trend exists in the correlation between respondents’ ages and

their level of support for athletes speaking out against issues related to social justice and racial equality.

In the following question, the survey asked respondents about their beliefs regarding athletes' rights to share their political views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events. 42.22% of respondents (228) selected that "Athletes should be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events." However, more respondents (280) chose the second option: "Athletes should be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality, but only outside of sporting events" amounting to 51.85%. A marginally smaller number of respondents (32) chose the third option: "Athletes should not share their views related to social justice and racial equality publicly" amounting to 5.93%.

*Figure 8: Survey Respondents' Views About Athletes Sharing their Political Views During Sporting Events*

Q9 - Which of the following statements do you most agree with?



When respondents were asked to state their level of agreeance with the statement "I am more likely to support teams and/or athletes that promote social justice and racial equality," 541 respondents selected from a list of choices. The largest number of participants (189 or 34.94%)

chose the “neutral” option. The second highest total (130) answered “Very true” which was followed by 87 respondents who answered “Somewhat true.” In contrast, 15.16% of the respondents (82) answered “Very untrue” to this statement. The smallest number of respondents (53) marked “Somewhat untrue” in response to this statement.

The following question asked respondents “How much do you agree with the following statement: Athletes or teams should be able to sit out or forfeit games in solidarity of social justice and racial equality.” The results of this question showed a nearly even distribution of respondents who either completely agree or completely disagree with this sentiment. One hundred and 30 survey participants responded that they “Completely agree” with the aforementioned statement. In contrast, 127 participants answered “None at all” in regard to their level of agreement. This shows a marginally small difference of merely three votes or 0.55% among these two extremes.

The final question was the one entirely open-ended question that survey participants were asked to answer. The question asked respondents “What do you think is the most appropriate way for collegiate and professional athletes to express their feelings about social justice and racial equality?” 400 of the 545 respondents provided a response to this question. The responses were very diverse in length, opinion, and how strongly these opinions were stated. The largest number of respondents answered that athletes should share these feelings outside of sporting events through platforms such as social media or press conferences. The following responses were a few that expressed these sentiments in regards to how athletes should express their opinions: “post-game press conference or event,” “I think that they should use social media platforms, and cameos/appearances on television or on the radio. I believe that they already have enough of a platform, that they could honest do it outside of the sporting event,” “news channels,

social media's, etc. where they have a platform,” and “I fully support athletes expressing their support of social justice and racial equality. But, I think that they should either express this in personal statements/social media accounts or in coordinated efforts with their employers. But if an athlete makes any statement (about any subject) that was not okayed by their team or organization while acting in an official capacity, I do think that their team should be able to fire them. When athletes are acting in an official capacity, such as during games, I think they should be required to coordinate such messages with their bosses. Regular employees don't have the right to surprise their employees with personal causes while on the job, and I don't think athletes should have special privileges. However, I do think that athletes should be allowed to post whatever they want on social media and should encourage their teammates and bosses to campaign for social justice.”

Several other respondents expressed that they felt that athletes should share their political beliefs through their actions off the court, field, or arena. One respondent wrote, “Through tangible actions, such as donating to black-owned businesses or organizations promoting racial equality.” Another respondent echoed this thought by stating, “Donate their money to those they think are being treated unfairly.” Another respondent encouraged primarily taking action outside of the sport but still using sports as a platform for change if necessary by stating, “I think looking for ways to take action in their communities outside the game will always be the most effective thing an athlete, or anyone else, can do to try to address these problems, but in light of the platforms athletes have on a national stage, making public statements and wearing apparel designed to bring increased awareness to the issue during the game seems like an appropriate way to get the message across.”

Multiple other participants responded that athletes should share their political views on their own time and not while representing a franchise or anyone else. One respondent stated, “Not at work. They can on their own time and that should be their right. Not at work or when representing someone else.” Sharing a similar thought, one respondent answered, “On their own platforms. Away from the team or college.” Reiterating that thought, another participant felt that athletes should share their political views related to social justice and racial equality “on their own time. Not in relation to the school or organization they are playing for. Not everyone at that school may agree but only the athletes will be heard [because] they have a bigger platform.”

Several respondents voiced that athletes should be able to share their opinions as long as they do so in a peaceful manner. “In whatever peaceful manner they choose,” responded one participant. Another wrote, “I guess an ‘appropriate’ way to express their feelings is to avoid any violent acts. I am fine with peaceful action.” Many simply wrote, “Peacefully.”

A few respondents claimed that athletes should not be able to share their political views at all. “None, no one wants to hear it,” wrote one respondent. One respondent posed a question in response to further convey this idea. The respondent asked, “Why do they feel they get the right to speak out publicly at all? Do I feel I have ever been discriminated against because I am a woman? Sure I have. Athletics should be treated as any other working person. You are getting paid to do your job! We have all been discriminated against one way or another! Suck it up, Buttercup!” Others provided shorter responses such as “They shouldn’t.” Although many respondents mentioned the importance of respecting the country, the flag, and veterans, one respondent shared that only those who had served in the military had the right to speak up. The respondent wrote, “Enlist in the Armed Forces, do your duty, then you have a say. Put up, or shut up!”

Some respondents shared that they did not feel as though they had the right to determine what athletes should and should not have the right to do. One respondent stated that athletes should share their political views “However they feel is best. As a white person, I should not and will not judge how people of color speak out against injustices.” Another respondent shared a similar thought by stating, “It is not my place to tell them how to express their feelings on the topic.”

Many survey participants also expressed that athletes have a right to share their political beliefs regarding social justice and racial equality in any way they see fit. One respondent referenced the First Amendment to convey this idea by stating, “In whatever way they feel. Any legal enforcement of the manner in which a person expresses their views is a major constitutional violation and is an example of extreme tyranny.” Some simply respond by saying, “Speak up!” or “However they see fit.” Echoing those ideas, one participant wrote that athletes should, “Use the sport as a platform to make a statement.” Another participant wrote that athletes should “Be poised when talking about such (and most do this already I’d say). This is an important topic, it’s puzzling that people don’t think those on a platform should voice out about the inequalities.”

In all, I found that individuals’ responses to the survey questions were more varied than I expected. The survey was sent to a large group of college students and therefore completed in large part by college students. It was also circulated through social media accounts. While the majority of respondents were supportive of athletes sharing their views related to social justice and racial equality, I was surprised to discover that more respondents were unsupportive of athletes sharing these beliefs during sporting events. I do feel that the results of the survey could potentially be more accurate if I had more diversity in respondents’ races/ethnicities and geographic locations.

### **Demographics of Respondents Working Within Athletics**

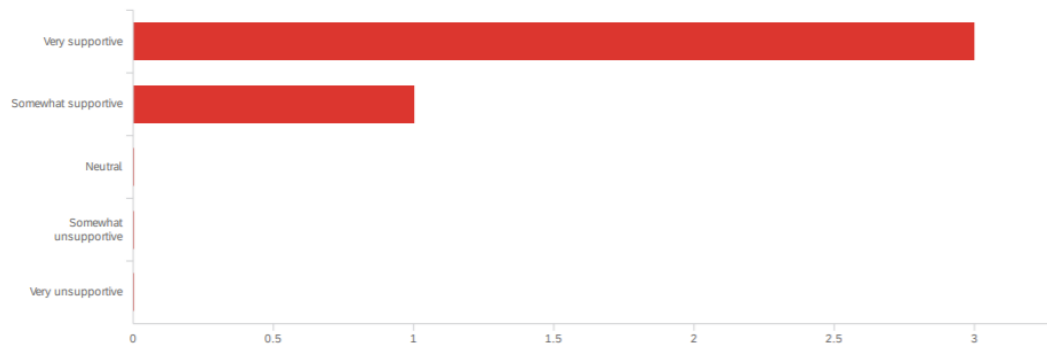
As previously mentioned, the second survey was designed specifically for professionals working within athletics. Although the anonymous link to the survey was sent to 41 professionals with a message urging them to complete the survey, only four responded to it. In contrast to the previous survey, respondents were not diverse among lines of gender, race, or age. All four respondents were 54-59 years old, male, and had received a bachelor's degree or higher education degrees. Three respondents reported that they were white while one respondent did not answer. One respondent was from the Southwest, two were from the Midwest, and one chose not to answer. When asked about which job most closely resembles their role within their organizations, all three participants that responded to this question selected "Athletics Director for Communications."

### **Viewpoint of Respondents Working Within Athletics**

In relation to sports, two respondents answered that they watch and/or follow professional sports teams "All the time" while two answered "Sometimes." When asked the same question about collegiate sports teams, all four respondents answered "All the time." The next question asked participants, "How supportive are you of athletes speaking out on issues related to social justice and racial equality?" To this, three respondents selected that they were "Very supportive" of this while one respondent chose that they were "Somewhat supportive" of this.

*Figure 9: Athletics Professionals' Views About Athletes Sharing their Political Views During Sporting Events*

Q9 - How supportive are you of athletes speaking out on issues related to social justice and racial equality?



The next question asked the professionals working within athletics to select the statement they most agreed with. Three respondents most agreed with the statement “Athletes should be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events.” One respondent most agreed to the statement “Athletes should be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality, but only outside of sporting events.”

The following question asked the participants how true the following statement was to them: “I am more likely to support teams and/or athletes that promote social justice and racial equality.” This question proved to be slightly more divisive as one respondent selected “Very true,” one felt “Neutral” about the statement, and two selected “Very untrue” in regards to the statement.

The last close-ended question of the survey asked participants to state their level of agreement to the following statement: “Athletes or teams should be able to sit out or forfeit games in solidarity of social justice and racial equality.” To this, one respondent chose that they



“Completely agree” with this idea. However, the other three respondents selected the option “Neither agree nor disagree.”

As in the previous survey, this survey ended with the entirely open-ended question “What do you think is the most appropriate way for collegiate and professional athletes to express their feelings about social justice and racial equality?” Three of the survey participants chose to respond to this question, and each expressed a different thought. One respondent stated that athletes’ beliefs should not represent those of their teams by saying, “Through their social accounts. Speak for themselves and not for their team or organization.” Another participant expressed a similar thought while hitting on the subject of unity. This respondent stated, “As a team, one individual is not bigger than a team, so it is important in my view that the entire team is on the same page. There is a way for them to express themselves together, and I believe that is a more powerful message of unity then having one individual do something that may in turn take away from the team.” The last respondent shared that they believe this right belongs to the athletes, yet there is a more effective way to do so. He stated, “I think however they choose to is appropriate. However, I also think that protesting in a way that doesn’t involve the national anthem is better, because it’s so polarizing. I think the message gets lost because so many people equate a national anthem kneel as an affront to the military or America in general.”

In all, the professionals working within athletics were supportive of athletes sharing their views related to social justice and racial equality. The majority of these individuals also supported athletes’ rights to share these views during athletic events. I do feel that this data is lacking in many areas though. I feel it could be skewed due to the small amount of respondents. The respondents were also all of the same age range, race, and professional role. I believe that the results would be more accurate with diversity in age and race/ethnicity. I would also feel

more confident in my results if I had been able to receive more responses from these professionals.

## **CHAPTER IV: LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL ERRORS**

As with any research, there were limitations while conducting the primary research for this study. Although a large number of respondents (545) completed the first survey, “Athletes and Social Activism,” I believe that the survey results would have been more accurate if they included more diversity in respondents’ demographics. For instance, the number of college aged individuals (18-29 years) far outnumbered every other age group with 252 respondents belonging to this age group. The large number of responses from this age group was expected since the survey was distributed to ~1,700 students in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at the University of Mississippi as well as among my peers through social media; however, a more equal distribution among the respondents’ age groups might have shown differences in the survey results. Along with age, there was also a lack of diversity among respondents’ races or ethnicities. As mentioned in the data above, nearly 92% of the respondents identified themselves as White while only 3.13% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 2.76% identified as Black or African American, 2.03% identified as Asian, and 0.18% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native. I believe that more diversity among respondents’ races or ethnicities would potentially reflect different findings as well. Along with age and race, most respondents reported that they live in the Midwest (36.28%) or Southeast (54.88%). As a result, there was a lack of representation from respondents in the Southwest (3.68%), Northeast (2.76%), and West (2.39%).

There were also limitations with the results of the second survey that was distributed solely to professionals working within athletics. First, although I attempted to distribute the survey to public relations or communications professionals from four teams per each major sport

played in the United States (National Basketball Association, Women's National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Hockey League, and Major League Soccer) along with professionals from every school in the Southeastern Conference and other major collegiate sports conferences in the United States, the contact information for professionals working on teams in the Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League were not publicly accessible. Along with this, although 41 individuals were sent the anonymous survey link twice, only four individuals completed the survey. Of course, it would have been ideal for more respondents to complete the survey. Additionally, each of the four respondents identified as males between the ages of 54-59. One respondent did not answer the remainder of the questions related to demographics; therefore, there was even less data in this section than the rest of the survey. However, the three respondents that did answer each question also identified as White and as the Athletics Director of Communications for their athletics programs. Of these, two respondents reported that they lived in the Midwest while one reported living in the Southwest. As shown, there was an extreme lack of diversity in age, race, gender, professional role, and geographic region that could have potentially limited the results of the survey.

There were also a couple of errors in the survey where the data could potentially be askew due to an error in the wording choice of the question as well as the options. I believe that the question "What racial and ethnic category do you belong to?" would be better phrased with the wording "What racial and ethnic category do you *most identify with*?" I believe that this word choice would be less limiting to respondents. In regards to the options for this question, I failed to include options for "mixed" or "other." I believe that including these options would also be less limiting to respondents and would better reflect the demographics of the respondents. I was

made aware of the issue by a peer, but a large number of participants had responded to the survey at that point. I felt that by changing the survey to include these options would further skew the data.

## **CHAPTER V: SURVEY SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the results of the survey proved my preliminary hypothesis that the majority of respondents would share the opinion that athletes should be allowed to share their views related to social justice and racial equality during sporting events incorrect. The majority of participants that responded to the general survey “Athletes and Social Activism” felt that athletes should be allowed to share these views about social justice and racial equality, but only outside of sporting events. For comparison, 51.85% of the total respondents shared this belief while 42.22% felt that athletes should be able to share these views during sporting events, and 5.93% felt that athletes should not share these views publicly at all. When analyzing and reflecting upon this data, I was mostly surprised by my incorrect hypothesis because I knew that this survey had been widely distributed to and taken by college students. Prior to this research, I had the preconceived notion that most college students or young adults supported athletes’ rights to protest or share their political views during games, matches, or other sporting events.

My second hypothesis was that professionals working within athletes would be the most supportive group in regards to athletes using their platforms to share their views about social justice and racial equality during sporting events. I hypothesized this because I felt that those working directly with athletes would be more sympathetic and have deeper understandings of athletes’ goals through these forms of protest. Although the data supported this hypothesis with a three to one vote among these respondents that athletes should be able to share these views during sporting events, I still see the need for more respondents with more diverse demographics to provide a more accurate answer.

My third and final hypothesis was that the majority of respondents that were opposed to athletes sharing their beliefs during sporting events would be among the older age groups and primarily Caucasian. The data collected from the survey also supported this hypothesis. As the results reflect, the percentage of respondents that were opposed to athletes speaking out on issues of social justice or racial equality in general increased with each age group. As mentioned, about 12.7% of those in the 18-29 age group were unsupportive of this. 27.8% of the respondents in the 30-39 age group were unsupportive. Continuing the upward trend, approximately 29.6% of adults in the 40-49 age range were unsupportive, and 45.5% of 50-59-year-olds were as well. Increasing by just one percent, 46.5% of those in the 60-69 age range were unsupportive while exactly 50% of those in the 70-79 age group were.

From these results as well as the findings in my secondary research, I have concluded that as sports and activism are fusing together more and more, the nation is divided on the subject. While most individuals support athletes' rights to express their beliefs about social justice and racial equality, some believe in a total separation of sports and social justice and racial equality. This polarization creates mixed backlash from sports fans and non-fans alike with some groups condemning athletic teams, leagues, or players for not using their platforms to engage in this fight and other groups condemning teams, leagues, or players for speaking out against these injustices. While the majority of survey respondents did believe that athlete activism should not occur during sporting events, several respondents were in favor of athletes sharing these messages while in the spotlight. There has also been a division among athletic leagues that have supported athletes' rights to protest in different forms during athletic events. Some leagues, such as the MLS, have been supportive of athletes protesting or sharing their views during athletic events all along. Other leagues, such as the NFL, have had rules that prevented or penalized

players for participating in protests during games. A key takeaway from my secondary research was that leagues' efforts to create initiatives, donate funds, or spread messages that support social justice and racial equality are reflected by the leagues' players. At the heart of each league are the players that are speaking up, sharing their views, and demanding more from their leagues as well as their nation. While the consensus among fans, nonfans, and even players about when athletes should share their views about social justice and racial equality remains divided, the last year alone has proven that the combination of sports, media, and social activism does have the power to create meaningful change.



**“C Us Rise”**

**Hypothetical Public Relations Campaign**

## **SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CLIENT AND MISSION**

### **Introduction**

After studying and analyzing what different athletic leagues, teams, and players have done to promote social justice and racial equality efforts, I wanted to create a hypothetical public relations campaign to demonstrate how I believe a professional sports team could successfully conduct a campaign of this nature. This hypothetical campaign is conducted primarily through media with an emphasis on employing social media. This campaign further demonstrates the meaningful change that can be created through the intersection of sports, media, and social activism.

### **Overview of the Client**

The Boston Celtics are an American professional basketball team in the NBA. The team was established on June 6, 1946 as one of the original eight teams in what was then known as the Basketball Association of America. In their near 75 years, the Celtics are tied as the winningest team in American basketball history with 17 World Championship wins (Augustyn 2020).

While the Celtics have left a legacy of success on the court, their work reaches far beyond the parquet. Founded in 1993, the Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation is the team's non-profit charity foundation. The mission of the Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation is, "To extend the reach of the Celtics championship legacy into the community through programs that directly benefit children in need." The Foundation partners with New England-based non-profit organizations to provide funding, support, and other resources to thousands of at risk or in need youth each year. The Shamrock Foundation has established partnerships with Berklee City

Music Network, Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston, Boston Children's Hospital, Boch Center, Horizons for Homeless Children, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Perkins School for the Blind, Positive Coaching Alliance, and The3PointFoundation along with other local non-profits (Bramos 2020). During the 2019-2020 season alone, the Foundation implemented over 40 community initiatives, hosted 200 events across New England, and invested \$2.4 million in the community (Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation 2020).

### **Analysis of Problem**

Amidst the coronavirus global pandemic, 2020 quickly proved to be a turbulent year around the world with widespread economic hardships, rising infection rates and death tolls, strict health protocols and parameters, and more. As the United States felt the impact of these hardships, the country had to have a conversation that could not remain unspoken—the overwhelming demand from citizens for an end to police brutality and systemic racism. Although the country has a history filled with citizens fighting for and demanding change through demonstrations, protests spiked to unprecedented levels in 2020. These were prompted by the arrest and subsequent death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old unarmed black man, by Minneapolis police officers. Bystanders' footage and officers' body cam footage revealed that an officer had Floyd pinned to the ground and kneeled on his neck for over eight minutes as Floyd repeatedly expressed his inability to breathe before dying (BBC News 2020). Floyd's death immediately sparked protests associated with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement across the nation. With yet another death of an unarmed black American, the recent killings of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery gained even more prominence, further demonstrating the United States' issues with racial injustice. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) recorded

more than 7,750 protests associated with BLM that occurred throughout all 50 states and Washington D.C. between May 26, 2020 and August 22, 2020 (Kishi & Jones 2020).

As these protests quickly spread throughout the United States as well as other parts of the world, Americans of all different ages, races, political affiliations, and backgrounds engaged in the national conversation of our country's race relations. The subject of social injustice and racial inequality quickly made its way front and center in the world of sports. Both professional and collegiate athletes from a variety of sports and locations began to engage in political and social activism, refusing to "shut up and dribble" or "stick to sports" as many Americans have urged over the years (Yuscavage 2018). This vocal activism existed among multiple members of the Boston Celtics family as well. Players such as Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum expressed their frustrations on social media immediately after the death of Floyd, with Brown hosting a peaceful protest in Atlanta, Ga. a mere four days later. Coach Brad Stevens took to Twitter for the first time in more than three years to retweet a statement from the National Basketball Coaches Association (NBCA) that condemned Floyd's death, police brutality, and racial oppression.

As a whole, the NBA has vocalized their grievances against social and racial injustice along with police brutality. On May 31, 2020, NBA commissioner Adam Silver sent an internal memo to NBA office workers in which he expressed his outrage over the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery while offering condolences to families and friends. Silver also stated, "Together with our teams and players, we will continue our efforts to promote inclusion and bridge divides through collective action, civic engagement, candid dialogue, and support organizations working toward justice and equality," (ESPN 2020). Silver's words were met with action as the NBA players resumed the season two months later on July 30—after having the season postponed in March due to the spread of COVID-19—with 300 players

wearing social justice messages on the backs of their jerseys. Many teams also took their peaceful protests to the court by kneeling during the national anthem. On August 28, the NBA and National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) released a joint statement on social justice and racial equality. The statement promised the creation of the National Basketball Social Justice Coalition (which was later established in November), converting team arenas into voting locations for the 2020 general election—for franchises that own and control their arena's property, and more advertisements during playoff games that promoted civic engagement and voting (NBA.com 2020). As the NBA joined the nation's outcry for social justice, racial equality, and an end to police brutality, the Boston Celtics are looking for a plan to fight for these ideals that directly impacts communities within the Greater Boston area.

### **Campaign Mission**

The objective of this campaign is to raise awareness of issues of social injustice and racial inequality while demonstrating the Boston Celtics franchise's commitment to combating these issues. Our goal is to directly work within and effectually impact the Boston community to show commitment to fighting against systemic racism, working towards equality, and combating police brutality. While this effort is primarily focused on impacting communities within the Greater Boston area, this initiative will be promoted nationally as well. Although this campaign was established in response to the recent events of racial injustice and police brutality, it was also established from the weight of centuries of racial and social injustices that could no longer be ignored. This campaign strives to achieve a balance of short-term and long-term changes that benefit our Boston communities and our nation.

### **Profile of Target Publics**

- I. Marginalized groups within the Greater Boston area

A. People of Color and Immigrants

1. Boston has progressively become more diverse throughout the years, earning its spot as one of the most diverse cities in the United States. 2019 Census Bureau data reported that the city had approximately 28.3% of foreign-born residents. The data also estimated that approximately 25.2% of Bostonians were reported as African-American, an estimated 9.7% were Asian, and about 19.8% were reported as Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau). As the Boston Celtics franchise is rooted in a diverse community—while also being composed of an ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse group of office workers, players, coaches, and other staffers—it is imperative that the Celtics identify these marginalized communities. By doing so, this helps ensure that the Celtics are connecting and engaging with diverse audiences while providing a sense of community, connection, and inclusivity for all. By hearing and learning the needs and concerns of these marginalized groups, it allows the Celtics to develop initiatives and promote actions that help aid these publics—especially in matters that concern racial oppression or other racial and/or social injustices.

B. In Need or At-Risk Youth

1. According to a 2014 report titled “Poverty in Boston,” 21.6% of Bostonians were living in poverty at the time—a rate that had remained fairly consistent over the past several years. These rates—which were highest among the Hispanic population (34.8%), the Asian population (26.6%), and the African-American population (23%)—reflect that

poverty disproportionately affects racial minorities. Along with this, the report reflected that 26.9% of children were living in poverty at the time, and 40.5% of children in one-parent households were living in poverty (Lima et al.). This report, as well as many others, reflects the significant rates of poverty that are often in large, urban areas such as Boston. For this reason, it is crucial that this campaign targets in need or at-risk youth—“teens who live in neighborhoods with high rates of violence, unemployment, and social instability, and who are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice and social service systems without interventions and support” (Dorchester’s Youth Together)—in order to work against the systemic barriers that are placed in their paths toward success.

## II. Celtics fans

### A. Local Boston fans

1. It is vital that the Celtics receive support from their local community members in their fight for social justice and racial equality. The Celtics’ geographic and cultural proximity to this public creates ample engagement opportunities in which change can be made. For the Celtics, this effort starts at home.
2. Fans throughout the nation
  - a) Social inequalities and systemic racism are prevalent throughout the nation; therefore, the support must come from all throughout the country rather than merely the Boston area.

### III. Businesses and organizations affiliated with the Celtics

A. It is crucial that businesses and organizations that support the Celtics also support this initiative, because this is a partnership. The Celtics represent the company or organization just as the company or organization represents the Celtics. It is a team effort; therefore, the Celtics are seeking to have all of their sponsors on board with this mission. The Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation is also looking to the Celtics' business and organization partnerships to help provide partial funding for the success of this campaign.



## **CAMPAIGN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Campaign Timeline**

As this campaign was established primarily in response to the incidents of racial and social injustice that occurred throughout spring and summer of 2020 and Americans' responses to these incidents, it was imperative that the campaign began in June 2020. Timeliness is of course crucial in public relations, and failure of the Boston Celtics to respond promptly to these incidents would likely hurt the franchise's image at a national level while alienating the Celtics from many different publics within the Boston community.

The global pandemic caused by the spread of COVID-19 has complicated certain aspects of this campaign, just as it has complicated many aspects of most individuals' daily lives. Due to the unpredictable and complicated nature of this disease, the campaign primarily takes place over media (print, broadcast, and social). However, some events are still being carried out in person with reduced numbers and CDC-recommended safety protocols. The level of players' and coaches' involvement throughout this campaign is also dependent upon the restructured schedules for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 NBA seasons.

There is no set end date for this campaign because of its nature. Issues of systemic racism and other forms of inequality simply are not going away over the span of a few months. Because of this, the campaign itself will run throughout June of 2021—one year from when it began—and be reevaluated in July. The next steps for the Celtics franchise to take will be determined then. However, certain initiatives implemented during this campaign will become regular events, actions, or expectations of the franchise.

## **Goals and Objectives**

Goal 1: Directly work within and effectually impact the Boston community to show commitment to fighting against systemic racism, working towards equality, and combating police brutality.

Objective 1: By June 30, 2021, decrease the number of youth arrests in Boston by 15%.

Objective 2: By June 30, 2021, increase the high school graduation rate in the Greater Boston area by 20%.

Objective 3: By June 30, 2021, increase relations between members of the Boston community and the Boston Police Department by 15%.

## **Key Messages**

### Campaign Theme

Community, Inclusion, Diversity, Justice, Commitment, Power

### Target Public

At-risk youth in urban Boston

### Objective 1

By June 30, 2021, decrease the number of youth arrests in Boston by 15%.

### Key Messages

1. The Boston Celtics players are committed to fostering relationships with students in the Greater Boston area and helping them experience personal growth through these mentorships.
2. Through the Celtics' push for educational opportunities for students in the Greater Boston area, more students will stay in school and away from potential criminal involvement.
3. On and off the court, the work never stops.

## Objective 2

By June 30, 2021, increase the high school graduation rate in the Greater Boston area by 20%.

### Key Messages

1. The Player Peer Mentorship fosters relationships among Celtics players and high school students. By encouraging their student mentees to persist in their academic efforts and offering advice, the Celtics players are helping motivate students to graduate high school.
2. Shamrock Scholars is a program designed to provide an incentive for middle school and high school students in the Boston community to make honor roll each semester. This is an early-action effort to help students continue to invest in and improve their academic careers.

## Objective 3

By June 30, 2021, increase relations between members of the Boston community and the Boston Police Department by 15%.

### Key Messages

1. Players, Parents, and Police provides an open discussion between Celtics players, their parents or guardians, and Boston police officers to work towards mitigating and ultimately eradicating racial profiling, police brutality, and other acts of racial injustice by police officers against individuals of color—primarily black Americans.
2. Through Players, Parents, and Police, Boston police officers have the opportunity to gain insight into the public perception of them. It also offers an opportunity for the Boston Police Department to reevaluate their actions, policies, and perspectives and see where reform must occur.
3. It's about much more than basketball.

## **TACTICS**

### **Press Release - *C Us Speak* Against Social and Racial Injustices (See Appendix A)**

The first step in this campaign was to issue an official press release announcing the Boston Celtics' commitment to condemning social injustice, systemic racism, and police brutality while also condemning the acts of injustice that have transpired in spring of 2020. This press release also served to officially announce the campaign titled "C Us Speak"—a name that stems from the Celtics' "C Us Rise" slogan. This release also urged fans as well as organizations, companies, and investors that partner with the Celtics to support this campaign.

### **Creative Brief - Campaign Vision (See Appendix B)**

Creating a creative brief was a necessary step in the planning process of this campaign. This brief established an insight into the vision of this campaign while offering an idea of the creative approach and delivery of the campaign. It offers a brief background of the Celtics, an overview of the campaign objectives, the target audience, the tone of voice of the campaign, key opportunities for the target audiences, as well as key messages of the campaign.

### **Mission Statement (See Appendix C)**

The next step was to create an updated mission statement for the Boston Celtics that reflected values that are consistent with the messages and objectives of this campaign. The Celtics previously did not have an official mission statement, so one was created to be published on their website. The new statement promotes ideals of social and racial equality, creating an inclusive environment for all, empowering others, and so forth. It also includes one of the key messages of the campaign: "It's about much more than basketball."

## **Commitment Pledge - Fans Pledge to Join the Celtics' *C U Speak* Movement (See Appendix D)**

As one of the original eight teams and the most winning team in the NBA, the Celtics' passionate fan base spans over generations of Americans along with fans from all over the world. When reaching Celtics fans, a key opportunity for this target audience was to establish a connection between the Boston Celtics franchise and its fan members. Throughout this campaign, the Celtics are striving to show fans that as they engage in this campaign, they become not only fans but valued members of the Boston Celtics family. One primary way to do this was by establishing a commitment pledge that fans from all across the world can sign online. By signing this virtual pledge, fans agree to join the Celtics in their *C Us Speak* campaign to fight against racial and social injustice as well as police brutality. When signing the pledge, fans also have the option to check a box to sign up for C Us Speak updates such as upcoming events, new initiatives, action challenges, fan engagement opportunities, and more.

### **Message to Investors**

As previously mentioned, it is crucial that the Celtics have the support of their partnering businesses and organizations in this campaign. The Celtics and the Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation are looking to these investors for financial support during this campaign. Along with this, the Celtics and their partnering organizations and businesses are essentially representing each other. It is important that the Celtics' messages in this campaign are not diminished or counteracted by investors' opposing stances or remarks. Because of this, a message was sent to the Celtics' partnering businesses and organizations at the beginning of this campaign urging them to support this initiative. The following message was sent: **(See Appendix E)**

## **“Champions of Justice” - Weekly Fan Features**

A key opportunity for fan engagement was through posting weekly fan features—dubbed “Champions of Justice”—on the Boston Celtics’ social media platforms. The premise behind this idea was that these accomplish multiple goals of this campaign through a simple, engaging post. First, these posts create a connection between the Boston Celtics franchise and their fanbase. These posts feature a fan from the Greater Boston area every other week and highlight how they are serving and bettering their community in regards to social justice and equality. This establishes that the Celtics are interested in what their fans are doing for their community and effectively strengthens the Celtics’ relationships with their local fans. On alternate weeks, these posts are to feature a fan from a different part of the country and show how they are doing good for their community and contributing to the campaign. These help strengthen the Celtics’ relationship with their fans at a national level.

Along with bettering fan’s perspectives and levels of engagement, these posts clearly accomplish the most vital goal of this campaign: promoting efforts to achieve social and racial justice. These “Championships of Justice” posts tie the “team” and “winning” mentalities to the need for increased awareness of social injustice and systemic racism while prompting fans to take the initiative to combat these norms. Essentially, the goal is to encourage fans to be alert and proactive in this fight within their own communities. By doing so, another key goal is being accomplished: fans are shown that as they engage in this campaign, they become not only fans but members of the Boston Celtics family.

Lastly, these posts help generate buzz for the Celtics. They provide fresh, creative content for the Celtics’ social media platforms while also reinforcing the Celtics’ commitment to fighting against the injustices our society has generally accepted for years upon years.

## **Player Testimonies**

The purpose of these testimonies is to demonstrate to fans that the Celtics are engaged in this campaign where it matters most to fans: the players. In these biweekly testimonies, a player is featured on the Celtics' social media platforms sharing their personal experiences that relate to social justice or injustice, racism, or police brutality. While the players are able to share their personal experiences on the receiving end of these injustices, this is by no means required. Instead, they can share their *why* behind being involved in this campaign, steps to encourage members of the Boston community or nation to be proactive in this effort, or things of a similar nature. While these testimonies are far from cookie cutter, they each demonstrate that the players are actively engaged within the mission of the campaign. In their elevated statuses of fame, they serve as role models to members of all ages throughout our nation. These have the power to create a positive impact in the goal of this campaign while also potentially boosting the overall perception of the Boston Celtics.

## **Round Table Discussions (See Appendix F)**

Another key way to engage with members of the Boston community is through monthly "Round Table Discussions". These discussions are held via Zoom with a few members of the Boston Celtics Family (i.e. players, coaching staff, etc.) and with members of the Boston community. A chosen moderator from the Boston community also helps to facilitate the conversation while a second moderator has the responsibility of admitting and removing participants if necessary. These encourage civil, open discussions of ideas on how to improve justice and equality within the community. These have been promoted over the Celtics' social media accounts.

When registering for these, a limited number of attendees are permitted for each monthly discussion to provide a better assurance that each participant may be actively engaged in the conversation. Prior to being provided with the Zoom link and password, participants must also sign an electronic form in which they agree to refrain from vulgar, hateful, and offensive speech. They must also agree to respectfully listen to others' opinions and refrain from inhibiting a free and open discussion of justice and equality. Failure to uphold these requests will result in their dismissal from the meeting by the second moderator.

### **Service Opportunities**

While most of this campaign is carried out through social media, it's also important to show the steps the Celtics are taking to fight for racial and social justice within their own community. For this reason, members of the Boston Celtics Family actively participate in community service projects each month. The Shamrock Foundation provides \$1,000 to a social justice organization that invests in long-term systemic change to help fund a volunteer project. These could be organizations that promote youth leadership, safer neighborhoods, equal economic opportunities for all, and things of a similar nature. Small groups composed of members of the Celtics family volunteer with these organizations to aid in these projects each month.

While these efforts demonstrate the Celtics' commitment to starting the effort right within their community, the hope is that these volunteer projects serve as an encouragement to other members of the Greater Boston area and beyond to work towards bettering their communities. Even after the primary campaign ends and enters the reevaluation stage, these monthly service projects will become a permanent initiative for the Celtics. This will stress the



importance of community service and involvement—specifically seeking long-term systemic change.

### **Players, Parents and Police**

One of the main goals of this campaign is to combat police brutality on a national scale, and a key objective is to increase relations between members of the Boston community and the Boston Police Department by 15%. One way to work towards achieving these is through an in-person, yet socially distanced discussion among Boston police officers, Celtics players, and players' parents or guardians.

This discussion, dubbed “Players, Parents, and Police”, provides an opportunity for Boston police officers to hear from Celtics players and their parents. Composed predominantly of black athletes, these players can share their experiences of growing up as black men that were subjected to racial profiling, racism, and other forms of racial injustice. Each player that chooses to participate can share their individual experiences and offer their advice to officers. Players' parents or guardians are also encouraged to attend and have the opportunity to share their experiences of raising black men and being fearful of police misconduct, racism, and more. The premise behind this is to offer Boston police officers (especially white officers) the opportunity to gain insight into how the public (primarily black Americans or members of other racial minorities) perceives them. It also offers an opportunity for the Boston Police Department to reevaluate their actions, policies, and perspectives and see where reform must occur.

### **Player Peer Mentorship**

Another key objective of this campaign is to increase the high school graduation rate in the Greater Boston area by 20%. In an effort to achieve this goal, the Player Peer Mentorship was established. This program facilitates mentorships between the Celtics players and high

school juniors and seniors in the Greater Boston area that have been deemed at-risk for dropping out by their teachers or administration. This nomination and pairing process is done confidentially among the school representatives and the Celtics. The players have the opportunity to volunteer for this mentorship program, and each player that chooses to do so is paired with a few students for the academic semester. The players meet one-on-one via Zoom with each of their student mentees twice a semester. During these meetings, the players get to know their mentees on a personal level while encouraging them in their academic careers. This mentorship was also established to help achieve another goal of the campaign: to decrease the number of youth arrests in Boston by 15% by June 30, 2021. By connecting students to players through this mentorship program and encouraging them in their academic careers, the goal is for more students to stay in school. With less students dropping out, the idea is that more would be in school instead of on the streets. With more students receiving their degrees and remaining committed to school activities (academics, sports, other extracurriculars), these students would have greater chances of future opportunities and be less likely to engage in harmful, criminal activities in their youth and later years.

### **Shamrock Scholars**

Another way to work toward increasing the high school graduation rate in the Greater Boston area is by taking an earlier, long-term approach. Through “Shamrock Scholars” middle and high school students are rewarded with a Celtics t-shirt each semester that they make the honor roll. These t-shirts are meant to serve as an incentive to encourage these students to make good grades. The “Shamrock Scholars” t-shirts are provided free of charge by Vistaprint through the Celtics’ partnership with the company.

## **Voting Promotions**

Another facet of this campaign was to promote voting in the weeks and months leading up to the 2020 elections. The Celtics encouraged fans, investors, and members of the organization to vote in the elections in an effort to voice their beliefs through political action. The Celtics shared the importance of making sure each individual's voice is heard by voting in elections. Through voting, there is a large opportunity to take action and elect officials that believe in and work towards an end in systemic racism and social injustice. These promotions were carried out over the Celtics' Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn accounts. These included pictures and videos that shared information regarding how to register to vote and important election dates. Short videos were also posted on these platforms in which players shared why they were voting; however, these videos did not directly or indirectly endorse specific candidates.

## **Billboard Advertisements**

In an effort to reach lower income and marginalized groups within the Greater Boston area and share this campaign message, advertisements were placed throughout this area on billboards and in bus shelters for the first six months of the campaign. Five advertisements were displayed on bus shelters at a time while five were displayed on billboards. These were rotated throughout different neighborhoods to ensure maximum exposure. These advertisements include messages that promote social and racial justice and show the Celtics' commitment to fighting for them. These were located primarily in lower income or marginalized communities in this area. Some of these advertisements were also published in the most popular foreign language of an area (i.e. Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, etc.) to further the reach of this campaign to those whose primary language is not English.

## **Speak Up & Dribble Camp**

### Event Overview and Goals

A key event in this campaign, and the largest, is the “Speak Up and Dribble” basketball camp. The general idea of this event was to host a basketball camp with Celtics players and coaches for lower income and at-risk youth in the urban Boston area. The name stems from the “shut up and dribble” statements that have been shared across social media from people opposed to athletes using their sports to share their social and racial justice platforms. There are three primary goals that comprise the mission of this event. The first goal is to empower and serve at-risk children in lower-income neighborhoods. The second is to demonstrate the Boston Celtics franchise’s commitment to promoting social justice and combating systemic racism. Essentially, this helps to demonstrate that the Boston Celtics are more than just an athletics program (returning back to the key themes: “It’s about much more than basketball” and “The Boston Celtics’ impact reaches far beyond the parquet”). This effort also falls in line with the motto of the camp; the Celtics won’t simply “shut up and shoot.” The final primary goal is to educate children on how to fight for social justice and equality, practice social responsibility, the importance of education and community service, and how to “speak up” to create change. This basketball camp will be an annual event hosted by the Celtics to ensure long-term systemic change.

### Safety Precautions for COVID-19

Of course, hosting a basketball camp during the coronavirus pandemic presented a number of challenges, but strict social distance parameters were established and followed for the safety of participants, players, coaches, and volunteers. Face masks were also worn at all times by everyone involved in the camp. Additional safety precautions were established and followed

as well such as daily symptom checks and asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for players, coaches, and volunteers, strict entering and exiting protocols, hand sanitizing stations, pre-packaged meals and snacks, hands free hydration stations, personal basketballs and water bottles for each participant, and so forth. The basketball camp is also located at the TD Garden in Boston. With its capacity to hold 19,580 individuals, the TD Garden offered plenty of room for coaches, players, and campers to spread out over the multiple levels and properly socially distance while participating in activities. Still, the capacity size of a “normal”, pre-pandemic basketball camp had to be greatly reduced in order to take the utmost care in regards to safety concerns. For this reason, only 100 campers were permitted to sign-up and participate each day, and these participants were divided into seven groups of 14-15. In order to have the largest impact and involve as much of the community’s low income and at-risk youth as possible, the camp was spread out over four weeks.

#### Target Audience

As previously mentioned, this basketball camp was held to reach, educate, empower, and support low income and at-risk youth in the Greater Boston area. It was open to boys and girls ages six years to fourteen years that also fell into one or both of the aforementioned categories. To ensure equal access to the camp, there was no cost for participants. To reach the targeted demographics, “Speak Up and Dribble” was advertised in select lower income neighborhoods and schools in the Greater Boston area.

#### Event Promotion/Advertising

##### **Flyers (See Appendix G)**

The basketball camp was primarily advertised through flyers to ensure direct contact with at-risk or low-income students’ parents or guardians. Schools in

impoverished neighborhoods in the urban Boston area were chosen in order to reach the target beneficiary group. These schools were contacted and informed about the mission of the basketball camp, and their permission was requested to advertise to students' parents or guardians through take-home flyers.

As mentioned earlier in this report, Boston is one of the most diverse cities in our nation. According to 2019 Census Bureau data, the city is home to over 28% of foreign-born residents. Boston also boasts a large percentage of different ethnicities that comprise the city. In order to reach marginalized populations (primarily immigrants) in which English is not the dominant language or spoken at all, it was imperative to work with each school's administration to ensure that each child received a promotional flyer in English as well as in their parent or guardian's primary language. Once each school's administration provided the additional languages needed, flyers were translated in each language. Appendix G includes a copy of the original promotional flyer in English as well as a copy of the Spanish translated version.

#### **Website (See Appendix H)**

On the bottom of each flyer was a statement that read, "For more info, visit [nba.com/celtics/speakupanddribble](https://nba.com/celtics/speakupanddribble)." When students' parents or guardians visited this address, they were provided with more information about the camp. Those interested in learning more information and seeing if their child was eligible to participate could submit a brief form with their name, email address, and zip code listed at the bottom of the page. Those that submitted this information were emailed with additional details and specifications and could potentially register their children this way. The photo gallery

from the camp, video, and additional camp details were also posted in this area of the website after the four week-event had ended.

### **Video for social media**

Since this camp was established to reach, educate, empower, and support low income and at-risk youth in the Greater Boston area, large-scale advertising was unnecessary. Only select neighborhood's schools were eligible to participate in the event, so large pre-event promotion would have likely created an influx of interest and attempted sign-ups from ineligible participants (those in mid to high income neighborhoods or not deemed at-risk).

However, a post-event promotion video was created from footage shot during the basketball camp. When camp participants' parents or guardians registered their child for the event, they had to give their consent that photos and/or videos of their child could be published online and used for promotional material. This video documented campers', coaches', and players' experiences from the Speak Up & Dribble basketball camp while defining the mission of the event. It also shared the immediate impacts of the camp as well as the hopeful long-term effects. This helps show the Celtics' commitment to the Boston community, their investment in caring for the children, and their dedication to working towards long-term systemic change and equal opportunities. The video was shared among the Celtics' various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn. As previously stated, the Speak Up & Dribble basketball camp will be an annual event, so this video could likely be used for future camp promotions.

### Camp Schedule

**Dates/Times:**

- October 3, 10, 17, 24 from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**Location:**

- TD Garden

**Number of Participants:**

- 100 per day (400 total)

**Groups (5 groups of 14 participants; 2 groups of 15 participants):**

- Group 1: 6-8 years (coed)
- Group 2: 9-10 years (girls)
- Group 3: 11-12 years (girls)
- Group 4: 13-14 years (girls)
- Group 5: 9-10 years (boys)
- Group 6: 11-12 years (boys)
- Group 7: 13-14 years (boys)

**Schedule:**

*All activities occur inside each group's designated area unless noted otherwise.*

TIME	STAFF	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5	GROUP 6	GROUP 7
8:00 AM	Arrive for COVID testing							
8:30 AM		Complete symptom checks online	Complete symptom checks online	Complete symptom checks online	Complete symptom checks online	Complete symptom checks online	Complete symptom checks online	Complete symptom checks online
9:00 AM					Arrive for registration; taken to assigned area			Arrive for registration; taken to assigned area
9:15 AM				Arrive for registration; taken to assigned area				Arrive for registration; taken to assigned area
9:30 AM				Arrive for registration; taken to assigned area		Arrive for registration; taken to assigned area		
9:45 AM		Arrive for registration; taken to assigned area						
10:00 AM		Opening address	Opening address	Opening address	Opening address	Opening address	Opening address	Opening address



		from Coach Stevens	from Coach Stevens	from Coach Stevens	from Coach Stevens	from Coach Stevens	from Coach Stevens	from Coach Stevens
10:15 AM		Group introduction s/ice breakers	Group introduction s/ice breakers	Group introduction s/ice breakers	Group introduction s/ice breakers	Group introduction s/ice breakers	Group introduction s/ice breakers	Group introduction s/ice breakers
10:30 AM		Basketball drills on court (half)	Basketball drills on court (half)	Ball handling in assigned area	Ball handling in assigned area	Reading & discussion with players	Ball handling in assigned area	Ball handling in assigned area
11:00 AM		Reading & discussion with players	Reading & discussion with players	Basketball drills on court (half)	Basketball drills on court (half)	Interactive learning activities	Community service presentation/ activity	Talks with players; classroom presentations
11:30 AM		Interactive learning activities	Interactive learning activities	Community service presentation/ activity	Community service presentation/ activity	Basketball drills on court (half)	Basketball drills on court (half)	Talks with players; classroom presentations
12:00 PM		Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Basketball drills on court (half)
12:30 PM		Community service presentation/ activity	Scrimmage on court (half)	Talks with players; classroom presentations	Talks with players; classroom presentations	Scrimmage on court (half)	Talks with players; classroom presentations	Lunch break
1:00 PM		Healthy lifestyle presentation	Healthy lifestyle presentation	Scrimmage on court (half)	Talks with players; classroom presentations	Healthy lifestyle presentation	Scrimmage on court (half)	Community service presentation/ activity
1:30 PM		Beginner workout	Beginner workout	Healthy lifestyle presentation	Scrimmage on court (half)	Beginner workout	Healthy lifestyle presentation	Scrimmage on court (half)
2:00 PM		Fundamental drills on court (half)	Community service presentation/ activity	Beginner workout	Beginner workout	Community service presentation/ activity	Beginner workout	Beginner workout
2:15 PM		Snack break	Snack break	Snack break	Snack break	Snack break	Snack break	Snack break
2:30 PM		Games	Games	Ball handling in assigned area	Shoot around on court (half)	Games	Ball handling in assigned area	Shoot around on court (half)
2:45		Closing	Closing	Closing	Closing	Closing	Closing	Closing

PM		address from Coach Stevens & players	address from Coach Stevens & players	address from Coach Stevens & players	address from Coach Stevens & players	address from Coach Stevens & players	address from Coach Stevens & players	address from Coach Stevens & players
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Speak Up & Dribble Schedule and Budget (See Appendix I)

**Campaign Schedule:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task/Event</b>
June 1, 2020	Release statement condemning recent acts of racial injustice
June 5, 2020	Send message to investors/partnerships announcing the campaign and asking for support
June 8, 2020	Issue press release announcing “C Us Speak” campaign; Announce campaign across social media platforms
June 9, 2020	Update mission statement on website; Announce updated statement across social media platforms
June 10, 2020	Host informational Zoom session with investors/partnerships
June 12, 2020	Release commitment pledge on website; Announce pledge across social media platforms
June 22, 2020	Round Table Discussion #1
July 2020	Round Table Discussion #2
July 2020	Begin weekly fan features (4)
July 2020	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
July 2020	Begin biweekly player testimonies (2)
July 2020	Campaign billboards are placed through lower income and marginalized communities in Greater Boston area

August 2020	Round Table Discussion #3
August 2020	Weekly fan features (4)
August 2020	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
August 2020	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
September 2020	Round Table Discussion #4
September 2020	Weekly fan features (4)
September 2020	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
September 2020	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
September 2020	Season ends; thank fans across all social media platforms
September 2020	Begin promoting Speak Up & Dribble; reach out to local schools in lower-income neighborhoods
September 2020	Player Peer Mentorship begins
September 2020	Shamrock Scholars begins
October 3, 10, 17, 24	Speak Up & Dribble camp dates
October 28	Release Speak Up & Dribble video across all social media platforms
October 2020	Round Table Discussion #5
October 2020	Weekly fan features (4)
October 2020	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
October 2020	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
October 2020	Begin promoting voting across all social media platforms
November 1-2, 2020	Promote voting across all social media platforms
November 3, 2020	Big voting push across all social media

	platforms
November 2020	Round Table Discussion #6
November 2020	Weekly fan features (4)
November 2020	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
November 2020	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
December 2020	Round Table Discussion #7
December 2020	Weekly fan features (4)
December 2020	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
December 2020	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
January 2021	Round Table Discussion #8
January 2021	Weekly fan features (4)
January 2021	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
January 2021	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
February 2021	Round Table Discussion #9
February 2021	Weekly fan features (4)
February 2021	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
February 2021	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
March 2021	Round Table Discussion #10
March 2021	Weekly fan features (4)
March 2021	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
March 2021	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
April 2021	Round Table Discussion #11
April 2021	Weekly fan features (4)

April 2021	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
April 2021	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
April 20, 2021	Celtics host Players, Parents, and Police
May 2021	Round Table Discussion #12
May 2021	Weekly fan features (4)
May 2021	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
May 2021	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
June 2021	Round Table Discussion #13
June 2021	Weekly fan features (4)
June 2021	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization
June 2021	Biweekly player testimonies (2)
July 2021	Campaign evaluation begins; Measure social media and web analytics, mass media impressions, financial contributions, and pledges signed; Begin working with city officials to compile data/reports; Distribute surveys
July 2021	Monthly service opportunity with local social justice organization

**Budget:**

Partnership with Vistaprint:

The Celtics have a multi-year partnership with Vistaprint in which the marketing and design company will serve as the Celtics' Exclusive Marketing and Design Partner. The partnership was established and designed to “make a lasting impact on local small businesses throughout the Greater Boston area and across New England” (Boston

Celtics). During this partnership, Vistaprint is working closely with the Celtics and the Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation to specifically support and empower low-income and minority communities. Through this partnership, Vistaprint serves as one of the main partners in this campaign. Vistaprint has provided every flyer, t-shirt, face mask, sign, and more needed for this campaign at no cost.

Promotion:

- Billboards from Blue Line Media (up to \$2,000/month) - up to **\$60,000/5**  
billboards for 6 months
- Bus shelter advertisements from Blue Line Media (up to \$600/month) - up to **\$18,000/5** advertisements for 6 months

Events:

- Players, Parents, and Police
  - Refreshments from Sweet Teez Bakery (a black-owned bakery in Boston)
    - Brownies - **\$72/2** dozen
    - Cookies - **\$96/4** dozen
  - Speak Up & Dribble basketball camp - **\$24,480.63**

Community Service:

- Projects (\$1,000/month) - **\$12,000**

Evaluation:

- Sprout Social - (\$249/month) - **\$3,237/13** months

**TOTAL: \$117,885.63**

## EVALUATION PLAN

The Celtics will evaluate the effectiveness of this campaign through six ways: social media and web analytics, mass media impressions, reports from city officials, surveys, financial contributions, and pledges signed.

### **Social Media and Web Analytics**

Social media and web analytics will be used to measure the engagement on social media posts across all social media platforms during the campaign period. These will be measured using the social media analytic tool Sprout Social to monitor effectiveness of primarily using social media to spread awareness of the initiatives throughout the campaign. Some questions when evaluating these numbers are: *Which social media posts got the most engagement? Did engagement across social media platforms (or particular social media platforms) increase during this campaign? Did follower rates increase/decrease during this campaign? Did posts relating to the campaign receive more, less, or average engagement than other posts not related to the campaign?*

### **Mass Media Impressions**

Mass media impressions from throughout the campaign period will be evaluated to determine approximately how many Bostonians as well as American citizens were potentially reached with campaign messages. These will also be used to evaluate future steps for future campaigns.

### **Reports from City Officials**

The Celtics will be working with city officials to determine if the first objective (to decrease the number of youth arrests in Boston by 15% by June 30, 2021) was met or not. The Celtics will also work with city officials and schools' administrators to determine if the second objective (to increase the high school graduation rate in the Greater Boston area by 20% by June 30, 2021) was met or not. In addition to this, it will be imperative to work with city officials to determine any immediate discernible effects of this campaign within the city of Boston. One question the Celtics hope to see answered will be whether social organizations received more support or involvement from the city during the campaign or not.

### **Post-Campaign Surveys**

The Celtics will utilize post-campaign surveys to measure if the third objective (to increase relations between members of the Boston community and the Boston Police Department by 15% by June 30, 2021) has been met or not. These surveys will directly ask respondents if their perception of the Boston Police Department has improved during the campaign, stayed the same, or worsened. These surveys will also determine the effect that this campaign has had on the Boston community through the perspective of the citizens. It will also ask respondents what they believe the Celtics franchise has done well during the campaign, what initiatives/actions should continue, and what areas could be improved. Some questions that will be determined from this survey are: *Did the message reach members of the Greater Boston area? Did marginalized and lower-income communities see any positive change? Did these communities feel more valued and/or respected?*

### **Financial Contributions**

As previously mentioned, it is imperative that the Celtics' partnering organizations, businesses, and investors support this campaign. To help evaluate the effectiveness of this



campaign, financial contributions to this campaign will be measured. The number of organizations, companies, and investors that offered their financial support will be measured along with the individual and total amounts donated.

**Pledges Signed**

The number of commitment pledges signed will also be measured to evaluate the support from the national and local level.

## APPENDIX

### Appendix A



Contact: Kaylee Crafton  
Cell Phone: 617.624.1331  
Email: [kcrafton@celticspr.com](mailto:kcrafton@celticspr.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***C Us Speak Against Social and Racial Injustices***

BOSTON, MASS., June 8, 2020 — It's a well-known but under discussed fact that issues of systemic racism and social inequities historically and continually plague our country, and Americans have witnessed these issues more than ever with the harrowing events that have occurred in recent weeks. While the Boston Celtics condemn these acts of injustice and acknowledge that our country's past cannot be undone, the Celtics are taking steps to combat these growing issues and fight for a better future.

The Celtics are officially launching the "C Us Speak" campaign to engage in the fight for social justice and racial equality in the Greater Boston area as well as within our nation. This decision was made in response to the inexcusable events that have transpired recently that have shed light on our country's long history of systemic racism. This is a collaborative campaign that was created after extensive discussions with Celtics players, coaches, owners, staff members, and other members of the Boston Celtics family.

The Boston Celtics are urging fans and partnering organizations from the Greater Boston area and across the nation to join this initiative. It's not a time to be silent. It's time that we let our nation C Us Speak.

**About the Boston Celtics:** Since 1946 Boston has proudly been the home of the 17-time World Champion Boston Celtics. As the record holders of the most championship titles in NBA history, the Celtics have undoubtedly left a legacy on the court, but the team also values the work they do that goes beyond the parquet.

###

If you would like more information about the Boston Celtics or the C Us Speak campaign, please call Kaylee Crafton at 617.624.1331 or email [kcrafton@celticspr.com](mailto:kcrafton@celticspr.com).

## Appendix B

# CREATIVE BRIEF

**Client:** Boston Celtics

**Project Name:** *C Us Rise* Campaign

**Issue Date:** June 2020

**Author:** Kaylee Crafton

### Background

Since 1946 Boston has proudly been the home of the 17-time World Champion Boston Celtics. As the record holders of the most championship titles in NBA history, the Celtics have undoubtedly left a legacy on the court, but the team also values the work they do that goes beyond the parquet.

### Objectives

Raise awareness of issues of social injustice and inequality while demonstrating the Boston Celtics franchise's commitment to combating these issues.

Directly work within and effectually impact the Boston community to show commitment to fighting against systemic racism and working towards equality.

### Target Audience

This campaign must target members of the Greater Boston area as well as fans throughout the nation that are actively seeking social justice and equality. This campaign must also target businesses or organizations that are affiliated with the Boston Celtics, because their commitment to this mission is crucial.

### Tone of Voice

Inspiring, powerful, forward thinking, inclusive, diverse

### Key Fan/Audience Opportunity

1. Fans and supporters of the Boston Celtics are a vital part of the solution. Their voices and their support contribute to the success of this campaign.

2. As fans engage in this campaign, they become not only fans but members of the Boston Celtics family.

3. *Social Media/Online:* Even those who are not physically located in the Greater Boston area can join this campaign through social media platforms or the website. (Physically distant but socially together.)

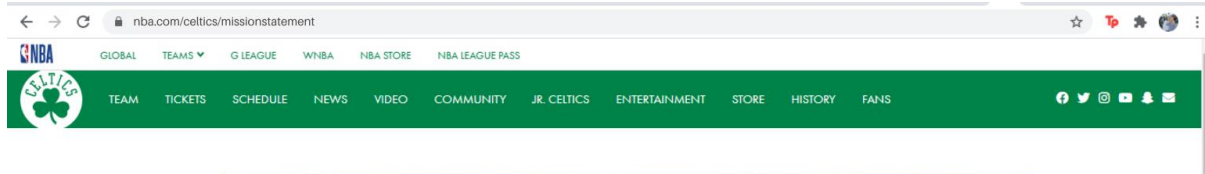
### Key Messages/Themes

It's about much more than basketball.

The Boston Celtics' impact reaches far beyond the parquet.

On and off the court, the work never stops.

## Appendix C



### ***Mission Statement***

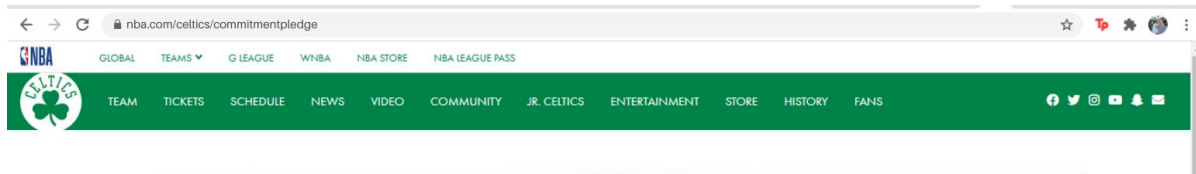
The Boston Celtics are dedicated to upholding the high standards of teamwork, integrity, strength, passion, and determination that have created a legacy of greatness since 1946.

Even more than this, each member of the Celtics Family is committed to the valued characteristics that reach far beyond the parquet.

Our mission is to foster an environment that is inclusive to all. We are dedicated to fighting for social justice and equality. We seek to empower others, contribute to the enrichment of our community, give a voice to the voiceless, and tear down the barriers that exist within our nation.

For the Boston Celtics, it's about much more than basketball.

## Appendix D



### ***C Us Speak Commitment Pledge***

It's no secret that the United States has a long, harrowing history of systemic racism and social inequities. In the early months of 2020, Americans witnessed these issues more than ever through the saddening and distressing events that unfolded.

While the Boston Celtics acknowledge these acts of hatred and condemn them, we look to move forward by engaging in the fight for social justice and racial equality in the Greater Boston area as well as within our nation. We encourage fans from all parts of the world to join our initiative and fight for the lives and rights of many Americans.

Do you wish to join us by signing this commitment pledge and letting our nation C Us Speak?

- ☒ Yes, I pledge to join the Celtics' *C Us Speak* initiative and fight for racial and social justice.
- ☒ I would like to receive updates about upcoming events, new initiatives, action challenges, fan engagement opportunities, and more.

## Appendix E

Kaylee Crafton  
Boston Celtics, Public Relations  
226 Causeway St.  
Fourth Floor  
Boston, MA 02114

(617) 624.1331

June 5, 2020

[Investor/Sponsor's Name]

[Company Name (if applicable)]

[Street Address]

[City / Zip Code]



Dear [Name],

Thank you for your continued support of the Boston Celtics franchise. Your support is immensely valued and contributes greatly to the legacy of this 17-time World Champions franchise.

On Monday, June 8 the Boston Celtics will be officially launching the "C U Speak" campaign to engage in the fight for social justice and racial equality in our Boston community as well as throughout our nation. The decision to host this campaign was made in response to the inexcusable events that have transpired recently that have shed light on our country's long history of systemic racism.

As an investor, you are a valued member of the Boston Celtics Family. In this challenging time within our country, we are asking for your support in this campaign. The Boston Celtics Shamrock Foundation would gladly accept any financial contributions that could aid us in the fight against social injustice and racial inequality as we seek to better the Greater Boston area. We would also appreciate your vocal support in this campaign.

For more information about the future of this campaign and how you can make a difference in the lives of many Bostonians and Americans, we will be hosting an informational Zoom session in the following week. We will provide you with a link once more details are finalized.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any immediate questions.

Best regards,

Kaylee Crafton

Boston Celtics, Public Relations





## Appendix G



# ***SPEAK UP & DRIBBLE***

## **BASKETBALL CAMP WITH THE BOSTON CELTICS**

**OCTOBER 3, 10, 17, 24**  
**10 AM - 3 PM**

YOUR STUDENT COULD JOIN THE BOSTON CELTICS AT THE TD GARDEN ON ONE OF THESE DATES TO LEARN HOW TO BE ONE OF TODAY'S BALLERS AND TOMORROW'S LEADERS.

FOR MORE INFO, VISIT  
[NBA.COM/CELTICS/SPEAKUPANDDRIBBLE](https://www.nba.com/celtics/speakupanddribble)





# ***SPEAK UP & DRIBBLE***

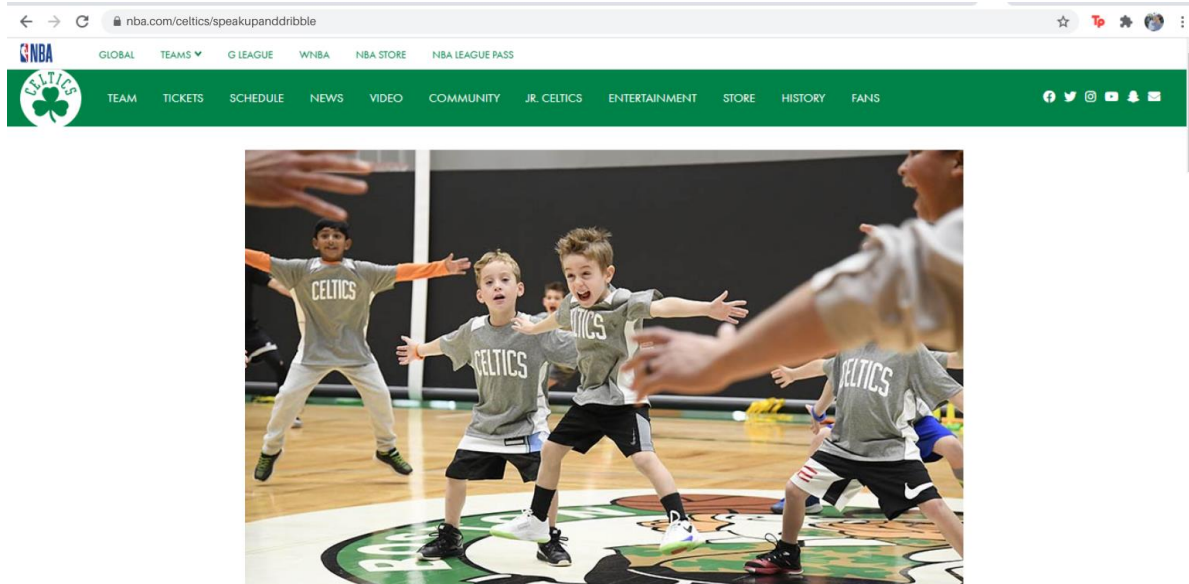
**CAMPAMENTO DE BALONCESTO CON LOS BOSTON CELTICS**

**3, 10, 17 Y 24 DE OCTUBRE  
10 - 3**

SU ESTUDIANTE PODRÍA UNIRSE A LOS BOSTON CELTICS EN EL  
TD GARDEN EN UNA DE ESTAS FECHAS PARA APRENDER A SER  
UNO DE LOS JUGADORES DE HOY Y LIDERES DE MANAÑA

PARA MÁS INFORMACIÓN VISITE  
[NBA.COM/CELTICS/SPEAKUPANDDRIBBLE](http://NBA.COM/CELTICS/SPEAKUPANDDRIBBLE)

## Appendix H



### ***Speak Up & Dribble***

The Celtics are excited to host their Speak Up & Dribble basketball camp!

This camp seeks to turn today's ballers into tomorrow's leaders. The main goals are to educate children on how to fight for social justice and equality, practice social responsibility, learn the importance of education and community service, and how to "speak up" to create change—all through the fun environment of basketball!

This camp is open to students ages 6-14 in the urban Boston area and will be held over four weeks with 100 participants per week. The dates are October 3, 10, 17, and 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Strict COVID-19 protocols will be enforced for the safety of students, players, coaches, and staff.

Are you interested in learning more and seeing if your child can participate? Fill out the information below!

**\*Parent/Guardian's Name:**

**\*Email:**

**\*Zip Code:**

## Appendix I

### *Speak Up & Dribble* Basketball Camp Budget

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#### Promotion

- Flyers - **free** / 1,000 from [Vistaprint](#)

#### Apparel and Gear

- T-shirts - **free** / 500 from [Vistaprint](#)
- Face masks - **free** / 500 from [Vistaprint](#)
- Drawstring bags - **free** / 450 from [Vistaprint](#)
- Water bottles- **free** / 500 from [Vistaprint](#)

#### Food and Beverages

- Lunch
  - Box lunches from [Down Home Catering](#) (a black-owned, women-owned business in Boston) - \$3,600 / 400 campers + \$3,600 / 100 players, coaches, and staff members x 4 weeks = \$7,200
  - + 15% gratuity = **\$8,280 total**
  - \*allergy concerns taken into consideration\*
- Snacks
  - Mountain tail mix - **\$360** / 480 from [Bargain Wholesale](#)
  - Welch's Fruit Snacks - **\$84** / 480 from [Amazon](#)
  - Fair trade organic bananas - **\$210** / 480-600 from [Fresh Direct](#)
  - Snyder's Gluten Free Pretzels - **\$327.37** / 456 from [Amazon](#)
- Drinks
  - Hands free water dispensers - **\$4,950** / 10 from [Aquaverve](#)
  - Powerade powder mix - **free** provided by NBA's sponsorship with Coca-Cola

#### Basketballs

- Spalding Indoor/Outdoor basketballs - **\$7,036** / 400 from [Epic Sports](#)

#### Community Service

- \$500 / week x 4 weeks = **\$2,000**

#### Educational

- Informational pamphlets for parents - **free** / 500 from [VistaPrint](#)
- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson & Rafael López - **\$27.26** / 2 from [Amazon](#)
- *All Because You Matter* by Tami Charles - **\$30.08** / 2 from [Amazon](#)

#### Safety Equipment

- Hand sanitizer dispensers - **\$920** / 20 from [Central Restaurant Products](#)
- Floor tape rolls - **\$255.92** / 48 from [Amazon](#)

#### Signage

- Event banners - **free** from Vistaprint

- Station banners - **free** from Vistaprint
- Safety protocols/rules signs - **free** from Vistaprint

**TOTAL: \$24,480.63**

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